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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Towards reimagining civil society collaborations in development

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#### Introduction

Collaborations between civil society organizations (CSOs) in development are a subject of ongoing critical debate. Questions such as how to advance transformative change, make development inclusive, deal with changing civic space, and localize civil society action are central to current critical explorations of collaborations between CSOs from the Global South and those from the Global North.

In this chapter, we contextualize this edited volume as a contribution to these discussions, combining ideas from research literature with CSOs' own reflection papers, guidelines, and studies. As illustrated by the book's title, *Reimagining Civil Society Collaborations in Development: Starting from the South*, this volume is a collection of contributions that present imaginings of practical ways in which change can take place, supported by empirical analyses of collaborations. The authors of the chapters in this volume come from different locations in the Global North and the Global South. Both academics and practitioners are represented among the authors, who thus combine theory-based analyses with reflections on long-term lived experiences of collaboration, each providing a unique voice and contribution to the ongoing debate.

In this book, we conceive of 'development' broadly, as actors involved in this debate address not only development but also humanitarian work and peacebuilding. The resulting insights are often shared across these domains; therefore, in this book, approaches from each of the three overlapping domains of development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding are included. Many academic publications on CSO collaborations in each of these domains reveal and problematize the dominance of Northern CSOs and donors. Furthermore, organizations and practitioners in the sector have recently begun to produce (self-)critical discussions and attempts to change practices.

The main aim of the book is to contribute to ongoing discussions concerning civil society collaborations by providing conceptually grounded and empirically embedded examples to support a reimagination of the nature of these collaborations. The contributions draw on diverse locations, experiences, and fields of development. However, each contribution shares the starting points of focusing on local contexts, questioning current understandings and practices, and providing new ideas on how to transform CSO collaborations to advance Southern leadership. The overall narrative of the book is built around the idea of ‘starting from the South’, which refers to the exploration of Southern actors’ vantage points, situated within their contexts, and their engagements with relevant others in shaping and contributing to development as potential starting points for rethinking CSO collaborations.

Thus far, discussions concerning the need to transform relations among CSOs largely begin from the North–South dyadic relations rooted in Northern control over funding and the imposition, through that control, of understandings, knowledges, priorities, and ways of working that are mostly based on the overall paradigm of managerialism (Aagaard & Trykker, 2019; Banks et al., 2015; De Almagro, 2018; Jalali, 2013). This literature thus generally focuses on the role of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and other Northern CSOs as key actors in a system that disadvantages CSOs in the Global South. Problems are widely understood to be structural and systemic and thus in need of system-level changes rather than small improvements. Such changes would require that Southern CSOs be at the centre and in the lead, rather than playing the role of implementation partners.

Despite the commitments to change towards the localization of development, as expressed in the Grand Bargain commitment for humanitarian action, for instance, and the broader discussions on shifts towards ‘equal partnership’, funding continues to be largely controlled by INGOs, Northern CSOs, and, often, their back donors. Research shows that it is still the case that only a small percentage of international development funds go directly to local- or national-level CSOs (see e.g. Development Initiatives, 2020). Many donors that provide funding for civil society initiatives emphasize contextualization and local ownership of programmes; however, they continue to support programming by Northern development CSOs and channel funds through them as ‘fundermediaries’ that pass funds to other actors as a main function (Srisikandarajah, 2015), rather than allocating these funds directly to organizations in the Global South. In a recent book, Mitchell and colleagues (2020) argue that INGOs have developed into organizations set up to manage programmes, arguably compromising their capacity to advance transformation. In practice, Northern development INGOs maintain positions of leadership and control, often working through programmes that are supposed to operate across countries. These programmes often involve programme-level Theories of Change that they seek to implement (sometimes in adapted form) through their partners in diverse contexts, contracted based on their fit with the INGOs’ or Northern CSOs’ ambitions, agreements with back

donors, and ways of working that are legitimate within the development sector. Themes like local ownership, sustainability, and empowerment are fundamental elements of legitimate ways of working.

At the same time, organizational requirements for collaboration continue to favour professionalized and formalized organizations, with governance, programmatic requirements, and accountability structures set up to meet the needs of INGOs or Northern CSOs and their funders rather than those of country-level CSOs or the people with whom they work (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013; cf. van Zyl & Claeyé, 2019). The expertise of INGOs and Northern CSOs is valued more than the contextual, experiential, and otherwise different expertise of CSOs in the Global South (Hayman et al., 2016). Through these structural conditions, civil society collaborations continue to impose understandings, agendas, and approaches on CSOs in the Global South. In these collaborations, such understandings, agendas, and approaches are commonly prioritized over others, with support going to organizations that are ready to work in line with these perspectives, while other voices are often depoliticized and silenced through organizational policies (see e.g. Banks et al., 2015; De Almagro, 2018; Seay, 2015; Stroup & Wong, 2017). Disagreements around what constitutes ‘the local’, with INGOs’ offices in the Global South being accused of displacing ‘really’ local organizations and reproducing unequal power relations at country level, have added to the complexity of the matter in recent years (Khan & Kontinen, 2021). INGOs’ readiness to engage with the dynamics and challenges they face has also been debated (Mitchell et al., 2020), with some publications suggesting that INGOs’ resistance to change is at least partly rooted in threats to their self-preservation posed by calls and ideas for sector transformation (Bond, 2021a; Fowler, 2016).

## **What needs to change? Recent reflections in the development system**

Although academic research does not yet offer much direction in terms of how to transform civil society collaboration in practical terms, numerous initiatives from within civil society have sought to contribute on this front in recent years. Some of these initiatives have taken the forms of seminars, conferences, and studies that result in publicly available reports calling for action. These initiatives are mostly organized by INGOs, or associations or consortia of INGOs, while sometimes prominently involving the voices of Southern CSOs and experts (e.g., Baguios et al., 2021; Barbelet et al., 2021; Bond, 2021a, 2021b). Other initiatives are more Southern-led or seek to integrate voices from North and South, such as the work of WACSI (see e.g. WACSI, 2021), a report by Moyo and Imafidon (2021), the RINGO initiative (RINGO, 2021a, 2021b), and the work of the Global Fund for Community Foundations (e.g. Hodgson et al., 2017).

The discussion within and about the development sector has been ongoing for years now. Control over resources, engrained organizational practices, and mental models appear to combine to create a situation where change can only come

through system transformation (see e.g. Bond, 2021a; Partos, 2022; Roesdahl et al., 2021). At the same time, in publications, the multiple changes sought are not necessarily identified or discussed in relation to other changes. Discussions primarily culminate in identifications of principles that should ground behaviour, along with descriptions and propagation of desired behaviours.

The changes that are propagated involve multiple actors (INGOs/Northern CSOs, funders, and country-level actors) and conditions structuring these actors' behaviours. Conditions that have been addressed in these discussions include power relations, norms, standards, values, practices, understandings, and discourses. In the following paragraphs, we introduce six main issues that actors from within the development sector – again, broadly conceived – have identified as themes and normative goals that should be pursued in transforming civil society collaborations. Some reflections are firmly embedded in the aid system, others put themselves more outside of it, presenting what those involved consider alternatives to a broken system. However, although arguments differ in approach and emphasis, many of the publications overlap in their analysis and envisioning of steps to move forward. The six main themes and goals represent common understandings about what should change in collaborations between CSOs.

First, a prominent and central argument is that control should shift to Southern CSOs and that collaboration with Southern CSOs should be geared towards providing support – rather than direction – to people and organizations well aware of their support needs. Shifting control over funding to Southern CSOs (see e.g. Bond, 2021a) and provision of core funding (Humentum, 2022) and 'quality funding' that is flexible, predictable, and multi-year (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2021; Willitts-King & Metcalfe-Hough, 2021) should be part of the change. Also direct funding of Southern CSOs is a theme, with publications indicating some increases of this, while also indicating barriers such as eligibility criteria and promoting alternative approaches to overcome these (AWID & Mama Cash, 2020; OECD, 2020; Ismail, 2019). Notably, there is almost no literature that addresses Southern CSOs as agents who can themselves do more to obtain funding directly. Meanwhile, the leadership of communities as actors with agency in their own right, and as rightful owners of their own development is often propagated, speaking often of 'locally-led' (Bond, 2021a) or 'community-led' (Hodgson et al., 2017) development, arguing for this in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness. With regard to attitudes and the roles emerging from these, 'How can we help?' should be the motto for INGOs and Northern CSOs, as they deploy their comparative strengths (e.g. in fundraising, technical capacities, or convening power) and play facilitating and bridging roles, accepting Southern ownership and leadership (Bond, 2021a; Oxfam, 2020; Partos, 2022; RINGO, 2021a; Roesdahl et al., 2021; Schmalenbach et al., 2019). Relatedly, working with existing networks rather than setting up collaborations anew is also sometimes proposed – to replace the practice of INGOs and Northern CSOs selecting partners based on their predefined programme needs (Hodgson et al., 2017; Partos, 2022; van Wessel et al., 2019).

Second, a reorientation around capacity and capacity strengthening is needed. Programmes should be rooted in capacities in the Global South, helping to develop these while also acknowledging already-existing capacities (Baguios et al., 2021; Partos, 2022; RINGO, 2021b; van Wessel, 2021). CSO publications also problematize the common practice of designing ‘capacity building’ based on observed capacity deficits vis-à-vis standards imposed by the North and argue for more mutual capacity development (Lijfering et al., 2022; Patel & van Brabant, 2017; Peace Direct, 2020). There are also calls for strengthening capacity to build leadership and sustainability rather than to serve project needs and compliance (Moyo & Imafidon, 2021). Some publications also stress that the COVID-19 crisis has brought to the fore the capacities and key roles of local CSOs (e.g. *Stopping as Success*, 2022).

Third, accountability structures should be created that centre on the people with whom CSOs work, accepting their criteria for success while giving more space to political roles for Southern actors and working against the push towards compliance with donor requirements as a key preoccupation for CSOs receiving funding. Programmes should build in sustainability and transition to local control by shifting resources and responsibilities over time through exit strategies and business models that match these ambitions (Bond, 2021a; Paige et al., 2021; Partos, 2022; Peace Direct, 2021; Stephen & Martini, 2019; van Brabant & Patel, 2018).

Fourth, the setup of collaborations must be representative of the people involved, rather than privilege the voices of (mostly Northern-based) INGO/ Northern CSO staff and ‘experts’. Through changes in governance structures, e.g. inclusion of Southern actors in boards and advisory committees, Southern actors can more effectively ensure that their perspectives shape interventions (Partos, 2022). A recent report focusing on the topic presented the governance of humanitarian INGOs as non-representative of affected populations or countries and as prioritizing management and fundraising competencies over subject matter expertise. The report advised improving representation ‘on metrics such as gender, race/ethnicity, background, geography, and age at the strategic level’, also including the ‘participation of aid recipients not only at the program level where accountability can often be treated as a box to tick, but also in governance’ (Worden & Saez, 2021, p. 11).

Fifth, rather than falling back on well-known approaches to minimize risk, there should be openness to experimentation and a readiness to try alternatives. Instead of seeking out partners that mirror leading CSOs’ own approaches and capacities, programmes should accommodate diversity in organization type, gender, cultural and ethnic group, knowledges, capacities, language, and age (Bond, 2021a; Paige et al., 2021). Trust is presented as a promising and just foundation for funding and collaboration (Dalberg, 2020; Partos, 2022).

Sixth, a broader, overarching argument is that the development sector has a colonial mentality, with inequalities sometimes also framed as being grounded in institutional racism, systematically downplaying actors in the Global South

as lacking not only expertise or capacity but also trustworthiness and the ‘neutrality’ required to do development work properly (Bond, 2021a; House of Commons International Development Committee, 2022). A need to ‘decolonize aid’ (Paige et al., 2021) when it comes to CSOs has been increasingly discussed. Recent reports also suggest that racism is a common experience for people of colour working in the development sector (Bheeroo et al., 2021; Paige et al., 2021). Responding to such conditions, Arbie Baguios developed an ‘anti-racist and decolonial framework’ to help understand and address them (Baguios, 2022). Relatedly, there have been calls to change development language. While seemingly inclusive notions such as empowerment, partnership, and localization are now widely embraced, these and other expressions can still be experienced as colonial, with reference to, for example, ‘developing countries’, ‘capacity building’, ‘beneficiaries’, and even ‘development’ called out as such. One could add here that concepts like ‘localization’, ‘Southern leadership’, and ‘local ownership’ are also imposed constructs that problematically define individuals and organizations in terms of unequal relations with outsiders (cf. Bond, 2021b). Interestingly, while local ownership and local leadership are central to these discussions, Southern CSOs, rather than being seen as active agents driving change through their own initiatives, still often appear to be conceptualized as the recipients of proposed changes that are to be offered to them by well-meaning transformed INGOs and donors (cf. Kluczevska, 2019), facilitating a more leading for local actors within programmes, or equal partnership. Other, rarer contributions emphasize Southern agency and ways of being as starting points. Such work may call for decolonizing ontologies, epistemologies, types of actors, relations, and actions (see e.g. Baguios et al., 2021). More rarely still, work may also zoom in on challenges within Southern contexts and within Southern CSOs, to be addressed by Southern CSOs themselves (e.g. Moyo & Imafidon, 2021).

## Recent initiatives for putting change into practice

There are also examples of diverse recent and ongoing initiatives that seek to advance some of the transformations that have been put forward in practice. The Start Network seeks to make systemic-level shifts in the way humanitarian aid is approached and delivered by shifting power and decentralizing decision making to locally-led networks and organizations.<sup>1</sup> The RINGO initiative operates as a network with a platform through which innovations transforming INGOs are collected, advanced, and shared (see RINGO, 2021a, 2021b). The Partos Shift the Power Lab seeks to advance transformation through co-creation of innovative solutions.<sup>2</sup> The Southern-centred NEAR Network is a platform of Southern CSOs seeking to advance Southern civil society leadership through innovations, knowledge sharing, and advocacy.<sup>3</sup>

Some donors and INGOs are also seeking transformation, at least to some degree and on some important fronts, in particular control over funding and agendas. Some foundations work to advance a more leading role for local and

national civil society. An example is the Start Fund that distributes funds for humanitarian action through local committees.<sup>4</sup> The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strengthening Civil Society programme (2021–2025), which allocates €1.364 billion to civil society collaborations, requires funded CSOs to shift control to CSOs in the Global South. Funded CSO alliances must include Southern CSOs as partners sharing control on various fronts, and Southern CSOs are eligible for leading roles (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). INGOs and others in this programme have developed new governance arrangements geared towards more shared control, as illustrated by the example of the Just Future consortium (Just Future, 2020). Drawing on other recent INGO initiatives that are transforming INGO governance, Pritchard (2021) provides a broad set of recommendations to shift power through governance, not only embedding communities in governance structures but also dismantling unequal pay structures and building a culture of locally led leadership. Some INGOs have also redefined their strategies in more generally transformative terms, such as Oxfam GB, stressing solidarity and shifting power as principles and conceptualizing its own role as supportive to Southern actors (Oxfam GB, 2020).

The sustainability of changes achieved by programmes is a key concern in many internationally funded CSO collaborations in development. Making initiatives more locally led means placing the control of programmes in the hands of local actors over time, as well as the exit of the international actors involved – a related concern around which initiatives are being taken. Initiatives and reports focusing on the question of how to attain sustainability often pay significant attention to this process of transitioning to local leadership, as illustrated by the recent book, *What Transformation Takes* (Peace Direct, 2020), which documents and analyses these processes in various programmes (see also Stopping as Success, 2022).

However, in spite of the apparent salience of the issues around collaborations and the embracement of transformative principles for CSO collaborations in the initiatives discussed above, thus far there appears to be disappointingly limited translation into practical ways of working and actual implementation across the development sector. We also find little examination for effectiveness (Barbelet et al., 2021; Bruschini-Chaumet et al., 2019; Paige et al., 2021; Stephen and Martini, 2019; van Brabant & Patel, 2018). At the same time, there appears to be much experimentation currently that has thus far not led to publications on implementation and impact.

Meanwhile, the #Shiftthepower movement, which started out from community philanthropy (with the Global Fund for Community Foundations in a leading role), is an example of initiatives questioning the centrality of INGOs in development.<sup>5</sup> This movement argues for the need for and feasibility of local actors more independently shaping development. Relatedly, in recent years, innovative funding structures have also been developed, including, for example, participatory grant-making, which involves constituencies in grantmaking.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, trust-based philanthropy does away with the formal risk-focused requirements of applying,



reporting, and accounting, replacing them with approaches that are less demanding on such fronts, grounding collaboration in trust. This creates space for otherwise easily excluded actors, flexibility, and direct and core funding that builds organizations' longer-term capacity.<sup>7</sup> Country-based pooled funding provides more direct access to funding for national and local CSOs (Baguios et al., 2021).

At the same time, many Southern CSOs continue to depend on foreign funding as a lifeline, and this funding is still largely controlled by Northern NGOs and INGOs, with little sign of imminent change. In turn, many Southern CSOs continue to adapt their agendas and ways of working to requirements of Northern CSOs and INGOs, implicating them, too, in the state of affairs. The casting away of the current funding architecture centred on INGOs, Northern CSOs, and their back donors seems unlikely. However, the key question of 'Who is in control – Northern or 'local' organizations?' reduces the question of how to shape development to one of control, rooted primarily in funding relations, which still does not do much justice to the multidimensional nature of questions regarding how and with whom civil society can shape development. Although we acknowledge that many civil society collaborations involve a variety of actors such as the media, universities, governments, and corporations, this book pushes these questions further with a focus on civil society itself, focusing on the specific power relations and debates around these actors. With this focus, we seek to help shape civil society collaborations through imaginings that start from the South, with collaborations in Southern contexts with Southern CSOs in leadership roles, grounded in their contextual realities. Rather than taking a funds-centred focus on 'shifting power', this book emphasizes 'shifting perspectives' as the basis for transformation (which would also have to accompany any shift in how funds are distributed and managed).

### **This book's contribution: towards new roles, relations, and processes**

In adopting the starting point of shifting perspectives, this book differs from many other publications on the transformation of civil society collaborations in development. Other work on this topic has tended to conceptualize and develop local ownership in terms of control, often within the boundaries of funding relations, taking a programmatic approach to development, with professional (I)NGOs collaborating with 'local' partners. Although they seek to provide more space to Southern CSOs to shape programmes and roles, such perspectives are still firmly rooted in existing understandings and approaches as to how to see and go about development. Although these works may be critical and somewhat destabilizing, they still take a great deal of usual practices for granted, maintaining a focus on such themes as 'leadership', 'capacity', 'management', financial sustainability', and 'communication'.

Rather than focusing on designed transformations in development, such as innovative financial arrangements and governance structures or their processual

and relational dimensions, in this book, we take the imagination as an important route for producing new possibilities and directions that can inspire others and provide a basis for further changes, including innovations in funding. Learning to do things differently is not only rooted in structures facilitating such learning. It is also rooted in the development of imaginings of what doing things differently could look like, and from which understandings of realities and of what is possible these might be achieved. In many of the chapters in this book, formal structures, and procedures in funding relations, therefore, do not have a leading role, although we acknowledge that these elements are important for many organizations.

In a similar vein, to capture productive imaginings of how to do things differently, we explore CSOs and their collaborations from the starting point that Southern CSOs are agents seeking to act from their own agendas and understandings of what is possible and desirable. CSOs are often expert navigators of their own contexts, and they are frequently embedded in multiple relations shaping their roles. The relation with a Northern (donor) partner is just one of these. Therefore, the book aims to counteract the bias of seeing Southern CSOs mainly as ‘partners’, viewing them instead as organizations and groups in their own right, embedded in the social and political contexts from which they emerged and in which they navigate.

Against this backdrop, from the perspective of ‘starting from the South’, the book seeks to answer three general and intertwined questions around roles, relations, and processes in civil society collaborations. We use ‘role’ to refer to behaviours tied to normative expectations associated with a position in the collaboration (drawing on Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). A ‘relation’ is a tie or set of ties between actors through which roles in the collaboration are defined and reinforced. By ‘process’, we mean a continuous operation or series of operations through which the nature of the collaboration is defined and enacted. First, focusing on roles, we ask how to reimagine who can do what in CSO collaborations when we start from the perspectives of Southern CSOs and acknowledge their agency. Second, exploring relations, we address the question of who matters and how, attempting to distance ourselves from the North–South binary. Third, looking at processes, we ask what new collaborations would look like if ‘starting from the South’ were more prevalent.

To sketch a conceptual landscape for addressing these questions, in Chapter 2, ‘Conceptual foundations: reimagining roles, relations, and processes’, Margit van Wessel and Tiina Kontinen introduce the notion of imagination as understood in this book and reflect on what the existing research literature says about roles, relations, and processes in civil society collaborations. Beginning with Chapter 3, each chapter offers a theoretically informed and empirically grounded argument addressing certain aspects of roles, relations, and processes in CSO collaborations. These chapters are grouped into five sections focusing on diverse perspectives related to the overall theme of starting from the South. The themes – ‘reclaiming the lead’, ‘displacing the North–South dyad’, ‘asking

Southern-centred questions', 'learning new roles for the North', and 'choosing new starting points for collaboration' – each provides an important angle from which to approach starting from the South. The collection is not exhaustive but offers a range of original insights from researchers and practitioners on how to explore CSO collaboration from a variety of relevant points of views that may come in with abandoning Northern dominance in conceptualizing and practicing CSO collaboration in development.

The first section focuses on the theme of reclaiming the lead. In Chapter 3, 'Reflections on using a community-led research and action (CLRA) methodology to explore alternatives in international development', Lise Woensdregt, Kibui Edwin Rwigy, and Naomi van Stapele provide ideas for doing things differently based on their experience with community-led research methodology, where local CSOs take leadership roles in research and analysis to inform the design of activities, with the Northern researchers acting as facilitators. In this chapter, the authors emphasize the processes through which Northern academics should give up power. Chapter 4, 'Reimagining development from local voices and positions – Southern feminist movements in the lead' by Njeri Kimotho, Catherine Odenyo-Ndekera, and Janna Visser, promotes new kinds of collaborations based on Southern feminist leadership and Southern feminists' understandings and practices of engaging with patriarchy. The authors of this chapter stress the role of Southern feminists as independent from Northern feminists and the processes of building the leadership of Southern feminist movements. In Chapter 5, 'Building resilient communities by growing community assets, capacities, and trust', Stella Wanjiru Chege, inspired by her long-term experience as a Southern practitioner, focuses on the roles of local CSOs as drivers of development and INGOs as investors. Discussing a particular approach, she illustrates processes that are geared towards building assets and pooling various resources, including the contributions of local actors. Finally, in Chapter 6, 'Contesting practices of aid localization in Jordan and Lebanon: Civil society organizations' mobilization of local knowledge', Elena Aoun, Lyla André and Alena Sander provide an analysis of how CSOs in Jordan and Lebanon reclaim leadership, rooted in their various kinds of knowledge, and how such agency on the part of CSOs leads to processes of Northern actors adjusting to the context-specific demands regarding the nature of collaboration.

The second section introduces ideas related to displacing the North–South dyad. In Chapter 7, 'Southern civil society organizations as practical hybrids: Dealing with legitimacy in a Ugandan gender advocacy organization', Tiina Kontinen and Alice Ndidde focus on the multiple legitimacy relations of Southern CSOs and show how legitimacy is not only negotiated vis-à-vis different actors but also diverse logics. The authors of this chapter explore the relations in which the legitimacy of Southern CSOs is negotiated and the processes of drawing from contextually relevant institutional logics. Susan Appe shows how diaspora grassroots organizations in the United States are reshaping the conventional divide between North and South in CSO collaborations in Chapter 8,

'Beyond the North–South dyad: Diaspora-led organizations in development collaborations'. Appe focuses on the roles of Northern-based Southern initiatives to support the homeland, where caring and personal relationships are central. In Chapter 9, 'Exploring mutual dependence through non-financial resource exchanges: A Tanzanian non-governmental organization network case study', Sandy Zook, Samantha Temple, and Emmanuel Malisa provide an analysis of the importance of non-financial resources in CSO networks and their power relations. The chapter investigates the roles of multiple partners providing different resources in the partnership, as well as the importance of recognizing a variety of resources in the relations and collaboration processes.

The third section, focusing on asking Southern-centred questions, continues with distancing the analysis from North–South relations and engaging with the dynamics within Southern civil society. In Chapter 10, 'Advocating for land rights in Kenya: A community-based organization's attempt to reconcile external funding with local legitimacy', Selma Zijlstra and Marja Spierenburg explore the legitimacy of Kenyan advocacy CSOs vis-à-vis the different standards stemming from Northern partners and local communities. These authors illustrate how recentring legitimacy relations to focus on communities and constituencies is essential and how a reflexive process is needed to reshape the roles of Northern CSOs. Chapter 11, 'Surreptitious symbiosis in promoting advocacy? Collaboration among non-governmental organizations, social movements, and activists in West Africa', by Emmanuel Kumi and Albert Arhin, shows how West-African CSOs find that these collaborations enhance advocacy through increased voice and impact, enhanced credibility, and visibility. The chapter also shows that transnational advocacy collaboration among NGOs, social movements, and activists is limited and runs into challenges related to power relations, and presents recommendations for addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities. Chapter 12, 'Moving beyond (en)forced North–South collaboration for development: Possibilities from Pakistan', by Themrise Khan, shifts the focus from Africa to Pakistan and examines the civil society initiatives drawing on the models of local charities rather than those created or supported by international funding. The chapter discusses the roles of Southern CSOs as independent from Northern CSOs, as well as the possibility of incentivizing the role of Southern actors and their potential for supporting development through existing local initiatives. Chapter 13, 'Shifting the narrative: localization and "shift the power" in the African context' by Emmanuel Kumi, Thomas Yeboah, Nancy Kankam Kusi, Jimm Chick Fomunjong, and Charles Kojo Vandyck shifts the narrative on localization and 'shift the power', exploring how African CSOs understand and contribute to changing the international aid architecture and identifying ways forward, with emphasis on changes within African contexts. In Chapter 14, 'Contrasting gifting postures in a Ghanaian local community: Are there lessons about African philanthropy?', Esi Eduafowa Sey and Justice Nyigimah Bawole identify a seemingly contrasting gifting behaviour when it comes to giving in African communities when exercised in everyday practices

or in the context of an INGO project. They show how willingness to contribute is logically related to the level of trust community members have and reflect on the implications of their argument for the emerging literature on African philanthropy in development.

The fourth section of the book shifts the lens to Northern actors and discusses ‘learning new roles for the North’. In Chapter 15, ‘Localizing humanitarian knowledge management: A call for pragmatic robust action’, Femke Mulder suggests an approach of pragmatic robust action to address power challenges in humanitarian knowledge management. The chapter views Southern CSOs as knowledge brokers in humanitarian action. She proposes a radical restructuring of North–South knowledge management relations to make it possible to put evolving local knowledges and debates at the centre of humanitarian action. She contends that this would make knowledge management more effective and improve the social justice outcomes of knowledge management data (data justice). Chapter 16, ‘The journey to Southern leadership in programming: The story of a decade-long Ghanaian–Dutch Partnership’, invites the reader to join a critical journey with the authors, Mohammed Awal Alhassan and Marijke Priester, practitioners coming from different sides of a Dutch–Ghanaian partnership. In this self-reflective dialogue, they retrospectively consider their collaboration, finding that Southern leadership was often absent and, even in the presence of the best of intentions, difficult to realize. They discuss how a change of mindset and a change of system, including new roles for Northern actors, will bring the goal of Southern leadership nearer. In Chapter 17, ‘Starting advocacy programmes from the South: Rethinking multi-country programming’, Margit van Wessel proposes turning advocacy programming upside-down. She presents avenues for building new roles for Northern CSOs working from this perspective: rethinking identity, linking up with what is there, and working with opportunities and complementarity.

The final main section of the book discusses choosing new starting points for collaboration. In Chapter 18, ‘A feminist approach to collaboration: A sex workers’ network in India’, B. Rajeshwari, Margit van Wessel, and Nandini Deo discuss how a feminist approach may facilitate counteracting power in situations where a Southern CSO is in the role of supporting its partners and facilitating their voices. These authors show how applying feminist principles such as creating space for diversity and acknowledging intersectionality can build equality in partnerships and facilitate dialogic processes. In Chapter 19, ‘Practising organizational autonomy at the community level: Evidence from advocacy projects in Uganda and Vietnam’, Lena Gutheil shows the role of Southern CSOs in navigating complex relations with their partners and the government to achieve their own goals. She suggests relativizing the notion of autonomy in civil society collaborations. An empirical analysis based on a taxonomy of autonomy demonstrates, for instance, how less autonomy can sometimes mean more effectiveness. In terms of process, the chapter suggests that relational autonomy is enacted during collaborations where various limiting and enabling factors from organizations and state institutions come into play. In Chapter 20 ‘Beyond the

North–South dichotomy: A case study on tackling global problems starting from the South’, drawing on their experience with FRIENDSHIP in Bangladesh, Runa Khan, Dorothee ter Kulve, and Sarah Haaïj discuss how to build new kinds of collaborations and funding relations internationally from a position of Southern leadership. In Chapter 21, ‘Shift the power? Constraints and enablers of more equitable partnerships between non-governmental organizations: The case of Dutch small-scale development initiatives in Uganda and India’, Sara Kinsbergen, Mieke Molthof, Linda van der Hoek, and Anna Vellinga reflect on the role of small-scale private development initiatives in supporting CSOs in the Global South. These authors highlight the importance of personal relations, which can create a long-term bond between actors from the North and those from the South but can also make it more difficult to confront the power of Northern actors. In the process of developing such private initiatives, implicit rules concerning negotiations evolve, which could be complemented by more formal rules to enable the negotiation of power differences.

In the final chapter, Margit van Wessel, Tiina Kontinen, and Justice Nyigmah Bawole return to the questions posed in the introductory chapter, reflect on the answers to these provided by the individual chapters, and review the main insights emerging from the five sections of the book. The chapter also discusses an agenda for further exploration, research, design, and experimentation concerning reimagining civil society collaborations in development in order to ‘start from the South’. Research and the work of practitioners are integrated here, as they will need to feed into each other to advance the fundamental transformations called for in this book.

## Notes

- 1 <https://startnetwork.org/locally-led-action>.
- 2 <https://www.partos.nl/werkgroep/shift-the-power-lab-2-0>.
- 3 <https://www.near.ngo>.
- 4 <https://startnetwork.org/start-fund>. For an overview, see Baguios et al. (2021).
- 5 <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org>. With increased popularity, the meaning of #shiftthepower has broadened, with participants in the debate using it with reference to a wide range of changes and transformations.
- 6 <https://Grantcraft.org>. See also <https://www.near.ngo>.
- 7 <https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org>.

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