The Iron Cage Re-revisited: Institutional Isomorphism in Non-profit Organisations in South Africa

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Abstract

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) are being pushed to become 'more business-like', reflecting global discourse on 'aid effectiveness' underpinned by managerialist modes of thinking that may be inappropriate to local contexts. We examine the nature of the tendency towards institutional isomorphism, critiquing it through a Postcolonial lens, and empirically investigating this with sixteen NPOs in South Africa's Eastern and Western Capes. The study suggests that NPOs mimic such professed 'best practice' in order to secure funding, while resistance creates hybrid management forms in line with local humanistic objectives. A critical cross-cultural management focus contributes here to both theory and praxis.

Keywords
Cross-cultural management, Hybridisation, Institutional Theory, International aid, Managerialism, Non-profit management, Postcolonial Theory, South Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades NPOs have increasingly been integrated into the international aid system as vehicles for the delivery of aid interventions on the ground (Lewis and Opoku-Mensah, 2006; Nelson, 2006). Setting out an agenda for NGO research, Lewis and Opoku-Mensah (2006, p.674) emphasise "the importance of the structural context in which NGOs operate—and in particular that created by donor policies and practices—in relation to NGO organisational performance."

We propose a framework for such enquiry that includes a consideration of context, power and agency into its analysis by drawing on insights from both institutionalist and culturalist perspectives in international and cross-cultural management (ICCM) theory. In order to account for the power dynamics at work, we draw on Postcolonial Theory and Homi Bhabha's (1984; 1994) notions of mimicry and hybridity. We argue that due to institutional isomorphic pressures NPOs are internalising the managerialist discourse emanating from the global governance structure of international aid and are having to adopt a business-like persona. While managerialist assumptions might rest on an a-historical, a-contextual and a-political understanding of the situation in which these NPOs operate, our data suggest that mimicry and hybridity rest on a translation and reworking of the discourse and associated practices through an historical and cultural lens. Management in NPOs can thus be seen as the outcome of an on-going process of appropriation and translation of the managerialist discourse emanating from the global governance structure of international aid. This leads to the emergence of hybrid ways of managing that seek to reconcile the managerialist focus on numbers with the humanist objectives of NPOs and results in a 'numbers *through* people' approach.

Few contributions to the literature so far take into account these processes. With an emphasis on effectiveness, management contributions to NPO praxis downplay contextual appropriateness. We aim to fill these gaps by offering a critical cross-cultural management framework that includes context, power and agency in understanding how management in NPOs is shaped.

We first discuss our theoretical framework by outlining our understanding of managerialism as both a set of ideas and practices that increasingly shape management and organisation in the NPO sector. We then examine how both the institutionalist and culturalist perspectives in ICCM can be seen as two sides of the same coin and how Postcolonial Theory might address the neglect of power dynamics within both these perspectives. Our methodological approach is then elaborated, with our empirical findings suggesting both acceptance and resistance to institutional isomorphism, with our conclusions pointing to implications and further research.

2. TOWARDS A THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL ISOMORPHISM IN NPO MANAGEMENT

2.1. Managerialism and effectiveness

There has been a push in recent years for NPOs to become 'more business-like' (Dart, 2004; Eikenberry, 2009; Maier, 2011) reinforced by the emergence of the global discourse on 'aid effectiveness' and 'managing for development results'. This discourse is underpinned by managerialist modes of thinking (Gulrajani, 2010; 2011) that emphasise agency, instrumental rationality, progress and ends over means.

At the ideological level, managerialism is based on the belief that trained managers and techniques of formal organising can solve the persistent social problems confronted by NPOs (Srinivas, 2009). This fits neatly with the modernist conception of development as a problem that needs a technical fix. According to Cooke and Dar (2008) managerialism in international aid is more than simply the drive towards modernisation but related to the manner in which modernisation is supposed to be achieved. Managerialism becomes the application of 'technocratic ideas and practices' that promise control, stability and progress (Cooke and Dar, 2008) and sees the private sector as the leading exponent of 'best practice' from which others must learn (Maier, 2011; Pollitt, 1993).

The globalisation of these ideas and practices (Dar and Cooke, 2008; Murphy, 2008) has attracted the scrutiny of NPO scholars (Beck *et al.*, 2008; Ebrahim, 2003; Lewis, 2007; Srinivas, in press). As Roberts *et al.* (2005, p.1849) point out, applied to the NPO sector managerialism "is marked by concepts like accountability, transparency, participation, and efficiency, as well as practices like double-entry bookkeeping, strategic planning, Logical Framework Analysis, project evaluation, and organizational self-assessment" and "has been shown to be pervasive in NGOs' operations". Maier *et al.* (2009) argue that the question of managerialism being beneficial to NPOs seems to be open to considerable discussion from both sides of the divide. What does transpire from the literature is that managerialism seems to have a pervasive effect on the day-to-day management of many NPOs in both the developed and Third World countries.

Managerialism has received considerable attention, for example within Critical Management Studies (Holmes, 2010; Murphy, 2008; Parker, 2002; Srinivas, in press) yet little empirical analysis has been conducted through the lenses of Institutional Theory (e.g., Leca and Naccache, 2006). We turn to this in the following section.

2.2. Institutionalists versus culturalists: Isomorphism or diversity?

Broadly, two perspectives have emerged from the debate on how environmental variance may affect organisational behaviour across cultures. The first is the 'culturalist' perspective (Haire *et al.*, 1966; Hofstede, 2001; Laurent, 1983; Schwartz, 1992; 1994; Tayeb, 1988; Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner, 1997), which assumes that differences are located in the beliefs and values of people (Sorge, 2004). The second approach is the 'institutionalist' perspective (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; J. W. Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Scott,

1995; Scott and J. W. Meyer, 1991) which emphasises the different institutional foundations accounting for existing and persisting cross-national differences in management practices (Child, 2002). A central tenet of institutional theory is the belief "that organisations sharing the same environment will employ similar practices and thus become 'isomorphic' with each other" (Kostova and Roth, 2002, p.215). Organisations are pressured to conform to a set of institutionalised beliefs and processes that are deemed legitimate (Dickson *et al.*, 2004; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983)(Dickson et al., 2004; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983)(Dickson et al., 2004; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983)(Dickson et al., 2004; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983)(Dickson et al., 2004; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). These widespread social understandings or rationalised myths (Clegg, 2010) manifest themselves in industrial relations, in political, legal, educational, and financial systems and the ensuing social relations that influence the management of organisations (Pudelko, 2006). Following this reasoning, management practices in NPOs are seen as influenced by the institutional context of international aid and by 'the myth' of aid effectiveness.

Institutional theory has, however, come under attack for its limited analysis of processes of isomorphism and institutionalisation (Lok and Willmott, 2006; Ramanath, 2009) and inadequate treatment of agency and power (Clegg, 2010; Leca and Naccache, 2006; Phillips *et al.*, 2004; Wilkinson, 1996). We argue here the first can be remedied by integrating a culturalist perspective.

Rather than seeing culturalist and institutionalist approaches as radically incommensurable, Sorge (2004) argues that these two cannot be separated from each other. The gap between both approaches can be bridged, he argues, as individual behaviour and social structure are reciprocally constituted. Norms are kept in place by the individuals who adhere to them, while at the same time these norms will guide behaviour. This resonates with Clegg (2010) who emphasises human agency when arguing that institutional order is always fragile, negotiated and open to disruption by people who either don't know or willingly do not adhere to the rules.

However, as Jackson (2011b) argues, such a view also neglects the (geopolitical) power relations in which the organisations are embedded and cross-cultural interaction occurs. Drawing on Foucault (1995), he argues culture is produced and reproduced at the social interface of different influences as "power produces, it makes reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1995, as cited in Jackson, 2011b, p.540). Hence, Jackson (2011b) argues that understanding the interaction effects among rules (institutions), values (culture) and control (power) may be a way forward in reconceptualising culture and pushing forward the boundaries of current cross-cultural management theory.

One way of bringing power and agency into the picture and conceptualising a bridge between institutionalist and culturalist perspectives might be to incorporate insights from Postcolonial Theory (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 2008; Said, 2003; Spivak, 1988), and more specifically Bhabha's (1984; 1994) notions of mimicry and hybridity. We turn to this in the next section.

2.3. Postcolonial Theory: Isomorphism or mimicry?

Postcolonial Theory can best be described as a loose conglomerate of scholars focusing their attention at the problem of the 'Other' (who is often located in developing countries) and his or her representation in Western discourse. Issues of power and knowledge are central to this representation and understanding of the categories of 'Self' and the 'Other'. It problematises the relationship between centre and periphery (Mishra and Hodge, 1991) by building on the concept of hegemony (or domination by consent). As Sharpe and Mir (2009) point out, hegemony is theorised as a particular condition of dominance where persuasion momentarily outweighs coercion.

This can be captured by Bhabha's (1984) notion of mimicry. For Bhabha mimicry is "a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (Bhabha, 1984, p.126). The colonial subject is encouraged to 'mimic' the coloniser, by adopting the coloniser's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007) paralleling institutional isomorphism as a process of homogenisation. As such, it constructs an organizational field in which development NGOs become more and more homogenised through the dominance of managerialist modes of thinking (Lewis, 2007; Roberts *et al.*, 2005; Srinivas, in press).

The process of mimicry, however, goes further than simply adopting and adapting to the coloniser's culture (Huddart, 2006). Bhabha introduces the concept of mimicry as an analytical tool to expand on the *ambivalent* effects of domination and hegemony. Domination and hegemony are never complete, he argues. In emulating the coloniser a kind of imperfect carbon copy is created in which the colonised is reproduced as "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1984, p.126) and, "mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (Bhabha, 1984, p.126).

This deviance and difference, Bhabha (1994) argues enters the world through a "process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences" (p. 252). While mimicry denotes the ways in which the international aid system tries to mould grassroots organizations, the outcome remains a mere reflection of the original. This opens up a space for resisting the managerialist discourse and for the revalorisation of human agency (e.g., Wilkinson, 1996) by allowing room for creative resistance. As such, hybridity captures the culturalist position, as the outcome of the cross-cultural encounter at the global-local interface.

Postcolonial Theory offers a bridge between both approaches by bringing power and agency into the picture. Taking the cue from the organisational field of NPOs operating in the context of South Africa, institutional isomorphism and mimicry can be seen to be reflected in the spread of managerialist ideas and practices to many NPOs. Management in NPOs can thus be seen as the outcome of an on-going process of isomorphic change, and active appropriation and translation, of interpretation and re-interpretation of the managerialist discourse emanating from the global governance structure of international aid. It becomes the construction of an object that is new, neither the one nor the other.

3. INTERROGATING ISOMORPHISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN NPOS:

MIMICRY AND RECOVERING LOCAL VOICES

3.1. Investigating South African NPOs

In order to investigate the nature of influence of managerialism through institutional isomorphism and its implications for effective and appropriate managing of NPOs in South Africa, we draw on data from our study of thirty one semi-structured interviews conducted with managers and team leaders from sixteen NPOs in the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces in South Africa. These interviews explored the daily management practices in the organisations and the ideas underlying the ways in which the organisations are managed. A brief description of the organisations participating can be found in Table 1 below. Three organisations are faith-based organisations (FBOs) with strong links to the Anglican Church. Ten organisations are NGOs and three are community-based organisations (CBOs). While the number of salaried personnel varies in the smaller organisations (the smallest organisation only had two salaried people on the payroll), they draw upon an extensive network of volunteers who also need to be managed as well.

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Table 1: about here
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A common denominator across all organisations was their involvement in HIV/AIDS service delivery (see Table 1 for the services rendered by the specific organisations), although not being the core business of all of the organisations. Although these differences in activities might seem to be undermining the comparability of the different cases, many similarities across the organisations emerged with regard to cross-cultural management issues and hybridisation. Hence, the selected organisations represent a rough cross-section in size, scope and activities of organisations involved in HIV/AIDS service delivery in the Eastern and Western Cape provinces in South Africa.

3.2. Data analysis

The data collected were analysed using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 8, to facilitate coding and subsequent analysis of the data. Coding was gradually refined over several rounds of data interrogation. The data were approached inductively with coded fragments saved as 'free nodes' and gradually refined by iteratively cross-examining the available data with existing literature and clustering into 'tree nodes'. This tree structure works as a kind of classification system for the 'free nodes' (Bazeley, 2007) and helps in identifying emerging themes and patterns across the different cases. As the project progressed, this process increasingly pointed towards a fit of the data with institutional isomorphism DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Bhabha's (1984; 1994) notions of mimicry and hybridity, as we now further elaborate and discuss.

3.3. Isomorphic change

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphic change occurs: coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. We follow these ideal type distinctions in the presentation and discussion of our findings about how managerialism and the idea of becoming 'more business-like' permeates the organisations we talked to.

3.3.1. Coercive isomorphism: donor requirements

Coercive isomorphism occurs where external agencies impose changes on organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, pp.150–151). A first factor that shapes management in the organisations participating in our research is the influence of donor organisations. This is mainly due to their dependency on outside funding to ensure organisational survival and sustainability. This relationship of dependency puts NPOs in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis their benefactors who can attach conditionalities to the funding they disperse. One respondent summarised her relation with the donors as follows: "So if a donor says jump. You say how high and you do it" (R19, 18 March 2009). Similar statements were also expressed by other interviewees.

Breaking these donor requirements down into their constituent components, these seem to be mainly concerned with issues of accountability, organisational capacity and organisational definition. At its most visible level, accountability is manifested in the numerous reports NPOs have to send to their different funders. As a respondent at NGO1 said:

"Every three months they [CBO3, a 'client' of NGO1] have to deliver a narrative report, which includes the risks, challenges, progress, changes in organisational structure, other donors, media coverage, growth and stories and examples of the people they have helped. So we [as 'clients' of large international donors] ask for these things: (1) financial reports; (2) narrative reports; (3) mentor and fieldwork analysis; (4) financial transparency; (5) statistics." (R30, June 2007)

The above infers organisations have the capacity and the organisational structures to implement and evaluate interventions. Understandably donor organisations want to make sure the NPO can properly deliver the interventions. This also leads to some interference in the internal housekeeping of NPOs. Explaining how donors influence management in the organisation, one respondent at NGO3 explained:

"That would typically come as part of the audit, before you even get funding. Like UNODC [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime] they did a site visit. They wanted to see all of our HR policies, they wanted to see the organogram, they had a few questions about management style [...] UNODC said the other day 'Wow, we note that you have high staff turnover.' I said 'yes, because social workers are leaving the NGO sector for government positions with better remuneration packages'. And they said, 'Well, are there maybe not other reasons for why they are leaving? Let's talk about those other reasons.' And that was for me an eye-opener. [...] So from a financial sustainability point of view they are definitely making sure that we are fast-tracking on some of the issues." (R2, 10 February 2010)

The case of CBO2 is illustrative of how the requirement of formal organisation might obstruct CBOs' workings. Although providing support for an isolated group of men affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, CBO2 found it difficult accessing funding, in large part because it did not yet constitute a legal entity. Failing to officially register as a NPO means they are not regarded as a 'proper' organisation. This, in turn, negatively impacts on their ability to attract funding from potential donors as in addition to the NPO registration number, the funding policies of many donors are based on a variety of formal organisational requirements such as a bank account, financial statements, expenditure and budget reports, a detailed business plan, a constitution accompanied by a clear mission statement, strategic planning and target setting and independent audit reports Not being versed in the language of administration (and thus not being able to establish itself as a registered NPO), donor discourse and the language of organisational development they remain trapped at the margins of the aid system.

At the level of the national state the drive towards becoming more business-like is also reinforced in emerging attempts by the government to define professional behaviour within the NPO sector as a consequence of the King Code of Governance Principles and the King Report on Governance for South Africa (King III) published in September 2009 with an aim to apply corporate governance principles to civil society organisations (CSOs) (Hendricks and Wyngaard, 2010).

As Roberts *et al.* (2005) argue, accountability, organisational capacity and organisational definition are core elements of managerialist discourse. The dominance of this discourse thus also seems to manifest itself in the isomorphic pressures many donors put on the recipients in terms of how organisations are supposed to be managed. This seems to be in line with Murphy's (2008) argument of the role of the World Bank (and by extension, we argue, the global governance structure of international aid) as a key driver of managerialism.

3.3.2. Mimetic isomorphism: best practices

Mimetic isomorphism describes the achievement of conformity through imitation of other organisations operating in the same organisational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, pp.151–152). As DiMaggio and Powell argue, this results from uncertainty. The dependency relationship between donors and NPOs and the inherent uncertainty about where next year's funding will come from lead organisations to adopt *modi operandi* they consider to be (more) successful. One of the respondents at NGO3 commented: "So funding became such a reality for me that it depends on the money that you have available, that will determine the extent to which as an NPO you can keep your sort of radars out for what is happening" (R2, 10 February 2010).

This reference to 'what is happening' out there refers, in part, to a strong perception emerging across a number of interviews, that the NPO sector in South Africa is currently undergoing some radical changes. Institutional theory argues that uncertainty and ambiguity, resulting from, for example, sectoral changes, may encourage organisations to imitate models that are perceived to be more legitimate or successful (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). While changes in donor requirements might explicitly or implicitly coerce organisations to adopt certain

managerialist ideas and practices, inter-organisational imitation might reinforce the above. Here, power seems to work in less observable ways.

As one of the respondents at NGO7 shared: "I think what I have learnt [at a University of South Africa Business Management course], I actually passed it over to my managers and some of the other NGO directors. Like especially the human resources book, the labour relations stuff. I mean everything, there are certain things that are a legal requirement, and I mean some of the organisations, like I passed it over to Childline, I passed it over to FAMSA [Family and Marriage Society of South Africa], I said [these are] good books. When we have our directors meeting we will look at things and we will share things with one another what is something good." (R18, 2 February 2011)

3.3.3. Normative isomorphism: professionalization

Normative isomorphism stems primarily from professionalization processes within an organisational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, pp.152–153). The process of becoming more business-like is accompanied by a drive to become more professional (see Chambers, 1985; 1993; 2007 for professionalism in the development sector as a whole). This is echoed in the following statement uttered by one of the participants: "You know, we have to be professional, we have to have policies in places, we have to have controls in place. We're not going to say, 'No this is an NGO, we run it as a family kiosk'. So we are governed here by rules and regulations that other businesses out there are being governed by." (R8, 15 February 2011). As DiMaggio and Powell (1983) point out, two aspects of professionalization strongly influence isomorphic change. These are formal education and the growth of professional networks.

Going through formal management education is often seen as an important factor in defining 'good management'. The same participant continues: "We need to learn things are changing, we can't be stereotyped. So I also attend three- or two-day courses on financial management, on business management, because as much as we are NGOs, we are running a business at the end of the day, so we need to be capacitated" (R8, 15 February 2011). Hence, business principles and tools seem to be the norm to which NPOs want to conform in order to gain some legitimacy as a 'proper' organisation. The participant clearly indicates she is seeking legitimacy by conforming to the standard and does not want to be stereotyped as an unprofessional organisation. This is all reinforced by the plethora of courses and workshops on offer locally and nationally, and the apparent professionalization of the sector through membership networks and bodies to which NPOs increasingly belong that seek to regulate and set out codes of ethics.

As Parker (2002) and others (e.g., Holmes, 2010; Murphy, 2008) pointed out, a central tenet of managerialism is the need for an educated managerial class that can function as agents of change. This idea seems to be largely internalised by the people participating in our research. Aside from its ethical component professionalization seems to rest on the adoption of business principles as the foundation of 'good management' in NPOs. However, as one respondent pointed out, reflecting a view expressed by others: "Can you really apply business, in a profit-making environment, can you apply all of those principles just as is into [the NPO sector]? No, that I must be honest. My experience and my learning, because I

have tried to do that and it does not always work as well. But it's kind of, you need the principles but you still need to almost adjust it" (R2, 10 February 2011). We turn to this in the next section.

3.4. Hybridity

Zucker (1983) argued that institutionalisation means that "alternatives may be literally unthinkable" (p.5 as cited by Clegg, 2010, p.5). Indeed, the above may seem to imply there might be very limited room for human agency and creative resistance. Our findings, however, show that the voice of the subaltern (Spivak, 1988) might not be completely obfuscated and that our research participants creatively engage with this managerialist discourse. This results in a hybrid, the characteristics of which we will now discuss.

One of the aspects used to differentiate third sector organisations from other organisational forms is their value-based orientation (Etzioni, 1975). Our data suggest that it is indeed this that mediates the adoption and adaptation of the managerialist discourse. A central phrase summarising the value system underpinning the NPO sector, to quote one respondent, is: "*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*" [Xhosa]. (R1, 10 March 2009). "Now what it means," the respondent continues, "is that no man is an island." As Newenham-Kahindi (2009, p.92) points out: "the emphasis in *Ubuntu* is on group solidarity and relationship-building. It is a concept that emphasises a spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness that individuals and groups display for each other." As such it is more an African/Xhosa way of life that transcends business and is incorporated into all aspects of life.

In terms of management, key elements of *Ubuntu* can be found in an emphasis on interpersonal relationships, social harmony, sharing, consensus-seeking, stakeholder orientation, and finally seeing the organisation as a community. Discussing ways in which these seemingly opposite ends of becoming business-like and *Ubuntu* meet, one respondent at NGO3 argues: "For me business principles is about [...] accountability, financial planning, resource planning. If you talk business language the autocratic dominant model doesn't work. [...] So somewhere [in] the business mindset, you do [something] because I am the boss. That for me has changed toward what the literature would call a more participatory, flat structure, and *Ubuntu* for me fits in that. *Ubuntu* says I don't want you to do something, because I tell you and I am the manager. *Ubuntu* says, you may want to do this, because it makes sense and it uplifts the community, which for me would be the work place. [...] So the approach is *Ubuntu* within the context of accountability, monitoring and evaluation, policies and procedures, all of that. So that is how I would link the two for myself." (R2, 10 February 2011).

Important in the extract above is her notion of promoting the good of the community. In that sense *Ubuntu* reminds us of the value placed on human beings within the organisation. While many of the team leaders and managers we spoke to have internalised the functionalist managerialist discourse, they still stress the human component. This points towards a difference in locus of human value (Jackson, 2002). Rather than seeing people primarily as a means to an end, the *Ubuntu*-inspired humanistic view of human value sees people as having a value in themselves. The hybrid emerging out of this encounter seems to be a 'business-

like' approach resting on the sense of community typical of *Ubuntu*, resulting in what one could term a 'numbers *through* people' approach.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we set out to examine what shapes management in NPOs. We aimed to describe how processes of homogenisation are at work in a selected number of NPOs. We argued that due to institutional isomorphic pressures managers and team leaders in NPOs are internalising the managerialist discourse emanating from the global governance structure of international aid and are becoming more and more business-like. This managerialist mode of thinking tends to overemphasise instrumental rationality and ends over means. It rests on an a-historical, a-contextual and a-political understanding of the situation in which these NPOs operate. In contrast to Zucker's (1983, as cited in Clegg, 2010) assertion that alternatives might be unthinkable, the data suggest that we might be able to recover the voice of the subaltern by drawing on Bhabha's (1984; 1994) notions of mimicry and hybridity. Mimicry as the process of internalisation and hybridity as an expression of creative resistance allow us to address the critique directed at Institutional Theory that it does not adequately account for process, human agency and power. Management in NPOs can thus be seen as the outcome of an on-going process of internalisation and adaptation of the managerialist discourse through a cultural lens. This leads to the emergence of hybrid ways of managing that seek to reconcile the managerialist focus on numbers with the humanist objectives of NPOs and results in a 'numbers *through* people'-approach. We believe this might offer an avenue into further developing an African NPO management theory consistent with their communal cultures (Jackson, 2004; Lutz, 2009). This is important in view of the criticisms that have been levelled at the inappropriateness of Western managerial discourse to local NPOs and CBOs in the development sector, and particularly in the context of sub-Saharan Africa (Jackson, 2011a).

Furthermore, within the current discourse on aid effectiveness and managing for development results our findings also suggest that a managerialist straightjacket might be counterproductive (as the case of CBO2 suggests) in attaining these goals. Therefore, hybridisation, as the blending of instrumentalist and humanist perspectives and practices, appears key to understanding how NPOs can adapt and survive in such context and by doing so contribute to this project. However, we believe that more research is necessary that not only interrogates this process, but asks the question, is it desirable for NPOs to increase this resistance to ensure more appropriate organisational management, and if so, how can this be done? Similarly questions of what types of hybrid management work best in what context need to be further investigated. If development policy is informed by a modernising, neoliberal rationale, and if its consequences are not desirable and not appropriate to the context, how can future research inform such policy, and how if necessary can it be changed?

We hope that we have at least laid the foundations of such research that can both accentuate the agency of those NPOs we seek to investigate, and through this,

inform development policy that currently appears to impose an isomorphic influence on development NPOs.

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Table 1. Brief description of the organisations

Organisation/ Project	Respondents	Core activities
CBO1	R12	People living with HIV/AIDS programme, OVC, foster care, door-to-door campaigns, HBC
CBO2	R13	Support for HIV-positive men, outreach and education/awareness initiatives
CBO3	R14	Vegetable garden, beadwork and sewing income generating project, HBC, HIV/AIDS awareness and counselling, supportive home visits, soup kitchen, pre-school for affected children and orphans, advocacy.
FBO1	R1	Basic education, family health, disaster relief, economic development and food security.
FBO2	R11	Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), anti-retroviral drug treatment (ARV), prevention and education, counselling and testing, poverty alleviation, home-based care (HBC)
FBO3	R19, R20	Voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), training and education for people living with HIV/AIDS, preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), access to treatment, food support; OVC and volunteer work
NGO1	R30	Building the capacity of CBOs working in the field of HIV and AIDS in the Eastern Cape.
NGO2	R29	Early child and youth development, school support and advancement, skills development.
NGO3	R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7	Children's home, community work (awareness, outreach, prevention), foster care and adoption, therapy, capacity building.
NGO4	R8	Community development, rural development, mobilisation of resources for needy communities (grants, gifts, training)
NGO5	R9, R10	Micro-funding for CBOs, community development, community training.
NGO6	R31	HBC, frail care, crèche and after-school care facility, training in life skills, HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns, assistance in obtaining social grants, provision of school fees and school uniforms, provision of food parcels, place of safety
NGO7	R15, R16, R17, R18	Children services, social work and HBC, special care for children with mental disabilities, adult rehabilitation services, adult skills trainings
NGO8	R21, R22	Advocacy, education and literacy, health and HIV/AIDS.
NGO9	R23, R24, R25, R26	Education and health care for children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS
NGO10	R27, R28	Sustainable livelihoods, sustainable development, skills development, food security, basic health training (living with HIV/AIDS)