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Guven, Ali Burak (2018) The World Bank and Transferring Development: Policy Movement through Technical Assistance by Adrian Robert Bazbauers. [Book Review]

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**The World Bank and transferring development: policy movement through technical assistance.** By **Adrian Robert Bazbauers**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. 258 pp. Index. £89.99. ISBN 978 3 319 58159 0. Available as e-book.

As the premier institution of international development and a key player in global economic governance, the World Bank has been an analytical staple of fields as wide-ranging as geography and sociology, anthropology and development studies, and public policy and international political economy. Yet this collective scholarly endeavour overwhelmingly centres on the organization's role as a development lender. Bazbauers' monograph is a welcome deviation from that common path. On offer is a historical exploration of the Bank's efforts to influence policy and institutions in its developing members through the innocuous-sounding but in actuality complex and often contested practices of technical assistance. And while the main aim of the book is to address a vital gap in the specialist literature on the organization, Bazbauers' accessible analysis also provides the uninitiated with valuable insight into the evolution and workings of the international development regime.

The theoretical framework and the line of argument are straightforward. Technical assistance is conceptualized as a form of policy transfer from the international to the domestic domain. Bazbauers argues that 'the more collaborative, voluntary, and consensual the provision of technical assistance, the better the success rates of policy transfer' (p. 2). His approach represents a synthesis of a critical-constructivist view of development, an actor-oriented perspective on policy transfer, and a focus on the relational dynamics between the Bank and its clients inspired by the 'policy mobilities' literature. This hybrid analytic vision is deployed to examine the evolution of four main types of technical assistance: technical assistance components of existing lending operations; stand-alone technical assistance programmes; early survey missions and the subsequent range of country-specific reports and documents; and, finally, the Bank's professional training programmes.

Foregrounding the exploration of these phenomena is a historical discussion (chapter 3) on the Bank that is rather superfluous for the expert, though necessary for the beginner. This is followed by individual chapters on the four types of technical assistance, with supporting evidence deriving mainly from official Bank documents and archives. Technical assistance components (chapter 4) are the least voluntary of the four as they are bundled with existing loans and are hence central to the Bank's core business of conditional lending. Close analysis of such components from the 1950s onwards shows how the organization's attention has evolved from 'hardware' technical assistance as part of loans on infrastructure, industry and rural development to in time also embrace 'software' elements, starting with the poverty-reduction focus of the McNamara years and continuing with the neoliberal policy elements of the Washington Consensus decades. The examination of stand-alone technical assistance loans (chapter 5) is probably the most rewarding part of the book for dedicated students of the Bank. Here we are treated to a bunch of interesting qualitative data from early collaboration between World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to the growth of the role of external consultants in technical assistance and insightful comparisons of project performance in various clients. Taken together, these two chapters provide ample hard evidence for the key arguments of the book, namely, the significance of 'the manner in which policy is packaged and presented' (p. 132) and the centrality of 'country ownership, participatory process, stakeholder engagement, and public communication' (p. 159).

The analysis of survey missions (chapter 6) and training institutes (chapter 7) is less ambitious in scope. The former makes an excellent case for including country-specific Bank reports and documents as policy transfer since they often produce 'actionable recommendations' (p. 175), although there are perils in throwing all such material into one bucket given the massive differences in intent and effect between, say, early survey missions,

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and current Country Partnership Frameworks (CPFs). The inclusion of training programmes with reference to the Economic Development Institute and its successor, the World Bank Institute, whereby practitioners from developing countries are socialized into dominant policy norms, is less controversial. However, this is also where the analysis gets a bit thin. On the whole, these latter chapters make one wonder whether the book might have gained from supplementing the archival material by staff interviews to unearth more first-hand perspective on the processes and outcomes of Bank practice. This could also allow the analysis to link up more fruitfully with contemporary dynamics, such as Jim Kim's sweeping reorganization, the ongoing transformation of international development cooperation given the emergence of new actors, and the rapidly intensifying challenges to postwar multilateralism.

This minor caveat aside, the volume not only helps fill an important gap in the literature on the World Bank but, given its evidentiary support for less hierarchical forms of development cooperation, also fits convincingly with the current, in many ways more progressive and egalitarian, wisdom in international development thinking. Compulsory reading for Bank specialists, Bazbauers' book will benefit a wide audience, including in particular development practitioners.

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