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Abstract

Every person at some point of their life 'owns' something. Possibly it was paid for or it was given to them; a gift. In either case common understanding is that this person now owns it, or differently said, has ownership. This seemingly every-day practice proves to be more complicated in development co-operation, in bilateral aid relations.

The 'gift of aid' in bilateral relations is wrapped in a context of intentions, history, economics, politics and strategic deliberations, creating a division between North and South, a dependency and not a mutual well-being. The 'gift' over the years has increasingly come with numerous conditionalities and beliefs of the North and has been led away from the centrality of people to a focus on effectiveness. Donors in the North want to see the results of their 'gift'.

The results-focus of donors has led to increased debate on how to make their aid more effective. Over the years aid had become less and less effective. In an attempt to deal with the complexity of the situation donors proposed to move from the imposing of conditions and decisions, to a situation where the recipients of aid where in charge themselves, they would have 'ownership'. Without much understanding of ownership and its manifestation in bilateral aid relations, donors enthusiastically took on this approach to deliver aid more effectively.

Donors in recent years have been more and more engaged with ownership in bilateral relations, yet evaluations are showing that the practice is far from being perfect; far from allowing ownership its existence. This research takes a dive into the world of bilateral aid relations and examines ownership as a concept, understanding its complexity and analyzes the reality of its existence within these bilateral relations. It reveals the intentions of donors and scrutinizes whether ownership is plain rhetoric or whether the concept can change the behavior of donors.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AusAID – Australian Agency for International Development

BWI – Bretton Woods Institution

CDF – Comprehensive Development Framework

CDI – Commitment to Development Index

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DFID – Department for International Development

GBS – General Budget Support

GRO – Grass Roots Organization

HIPC – Highly Indebted Poor Countries

IFI – International Financial Institute

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IOB – Inspectie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Beleidsevaluatie (Inspection International Development and Policy Evaluation, the Netherlands)

MDG – Millennium Development Goal

NGO – Non Governmental Organization

NMFA – Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

SAP – Structural Adjustment Policy

SIDA – Swedish International Development co-operation Agency

SWAP – Sector Wide Approach

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WB – World Bank

1. Situating the research

Providing insight into the research, this introduction serves as a primary exposure for the reader. First an indication of the research problem is offered, followed by the relevance, the methodology and limitations of the research. Ending this chapter is a short outline of the paper.

1.1 A problematic indication

> "International development does not (for the most part) operate through the negative power of compulsion or domination, but through a positive (or productive) power that wins legitimacy and empowers action while putting in place arrangements and 'regimes of truth' that structure the 'possible field of action' so that individuals constitute themselves, their desires, aspirations and interests 'in terms of the norms through which they are governed' as 'free' economic and social agents – as governable subjects." (Foucault, in Mosse and Lewis, 2005: 13)

The observation portrayed by Foucault requires closer inspection of what is happening in development co-operation and specifically in bilateral aid relations. Could it be true that 'good intentions' of Northern donors are being imposed on the 'South'? Or are good intentions somewhat genuine, yet operate in an arena of complex strategic politics and history? In short, who truly 'owns' development; in developmental terms, where does the 'ownership' lie? The complexities and questions require a re-establishment of the concept, making ownership one of the corner stones to a renewed debate about the meaning of development co-operation. Essentially, two questions stand out: 1) is ownership merely used to conceal political and economic intentions, disguising a decrease in the centrality of 'Southern populations' in the bilateral relations; plain donor rhetoric? And 2) can ownership become a catalyst for behavioral change of the donors?

These questions run through the research. This paper reviews the concept of ownership and distinguishes the implications for bilateral aid relations. Recently the Government of the Netherlands, together with other governments, is focusing on the notion of ownership in bilateral aid relations, triggered by dialogue on aid delivery and

effectiveness. Closely linked is the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[1], which is shaping the policies of governments, and sees ownership as a major element in promoting aid effectiveness. Questionable is whether this context permits ownership to become significant for bilateral aid relations.

Literature witnessed the increased impact of ownership as a notion in development in the nineties (Foster, 2000: 7) and like many new 'buzz' words it did not come with a clear understanding or indication of significance. Ownership was taken up by policy-makers, researchers and other development agents, yet the implications it carried were slowly disappearing somewhere in the forest of good intentions or desire to 'help'. Ownership was certainly commendable, but when translated into practice, meaning and interpretation were often lost (Gibson et al., 2005: 12).

In actuality there is no true consensus about what the word means, let alone how it can capture a meaningful position in development co-operation. Choritz acknowledges this saying that "ownership is an elusive concept that is open to different usages and interpretations" (Choritz, 2002: 2). Especially the context of aid gives rise to increased enquiry whether ownership is at all useful. In bilateral aid relations there exists, whether tangible or not, a feeling of inequality. This inequality is principally fed by a history of aid relations, where power is (again whether tangible or not) deeply imbedded in the flourishing donor-driven approaches, the structural adjustment policies/programmes and a general sense of wanting to help the poor (read: less knowledgeable) accomplish the development seen in the North as useful.

Lack of consensus or aptitude to fully grasp the meaning of ownership, offers the opportunity to revisit the concept and create an enhanced understanding of the composition of ownership and the implications ownership has for policies in bilateral aid. Looking at objectives and strategies of donor-government agencies, understanding ownership and critically analyzing donors will help assess whether or not ownership should be utilized in development co-operation. Can an elusive and problematic concept such as ownership, nestle itself within bilateral aid relations, creating a change in the

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[1] *Paris Declaration, 2005 http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf*

philosophy surrounding aid? Conceivably it is in the end just an additional rhetoric word for development co-operation to be taken with a 'pinch of salt'.

These issues form the starting point of the research question that guides this paper:

To what extent does development co-operation allow ownership to exist within bilateral aid agreements?

The following sub questions will help answer this.

1. How did ownership enter into development co-operation?
2. How can ownership be redefined to create an understandable concept?
3. How do donors conceptualize ownership in bilateral aid agreements?

   A comparative study of ownership in bilateral aid: Netherlands (Ministry of Development co-operation (NMFA)), United Kingdom (DFID), Sweden (SIDA), Australia (AusAID), United States of America (USAID)

4. What is the practice of donors surrounding ownership in bilateral aid agreements?

1.2 Relevant for bilateral relations?

Reports on bilateral relations present a rather under-researched application of the word ownership.[2] The meaning of ownership in combination with the effects on choices in aid relations, are rather vague. In the Netherlands for example the relative loose usage leads to apparent random 'levels of ownership' among countries engaged in bilateral relations. There is apparently no clarity as to what the implications are of incorporating ownership in the bilateral relations.

This does not only hold true for the Netherlands, but in general donors seem to be applying rather loosely the notion of ownership. This research will attempt to critically assess the different definitions applied by donors, their policies on ownership and their understanding of the concept and its implications.

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[2] IOB Evaluaties (2006)

Furthermore the research intends to revisit ownership and offer more clarity concerning the definition of ownership and the implications and/or applicability for bilateral aid relations. The more comprehensive definition should offer donors increased insight to initiate a rethinking and possibly a recreating of necessary space for ownership.

The donors analyzed in the paper are based on an attempt to capture a diverse range of vision in the donor community; From European/Scandinavian donors which appear to be more engaged with issues of ownership to Australia and the United States of America which are led extensively by national interests.

1.3 A matter of methods

Feeding this research is an array of literature on ownership and an in-depth study of literature is useful in unpacking the notion of ownership. The concept is revisited by reviewing literature, breaking up the notion and creating an operational definition valuable to analyze and assess bilateral aid relations. Revisiting ownership furthermore sheds light on the challenges and implications that ownership has for bilateral aid relations. The assorted elements of ownership are presented in an analytical framework. The analytical framework created for this research serves as a tool to assess the conceptualization that donors have of ownership vis-à-vis the theory.

Analyzing the concepts of donors requires a study of documents such as policies, strategies, whitepapers and others found on the respective websites of the donors. These documents compiled suggest the view donors have of ownership.

Similar to reviewing the conceptualization, study of donor practice is done. Assessment of this practice is based on published evaluation reports of the donors. Using the analytical framework and the set of indicators and proxy's constructed, analysis is done of the donors and their 'performance' vis-à-vis the theory of ownership.

1.4 Challenging impediments

Limitations of this research are related to use of electronically published reports on the respective websites of the donors, leaving the interpretation open to the researcher. The same holds true for the evaluation reports of the donors. Among donors there is a wide range of accessibility of these reports; some donors having only quick and short evaluations of entire countries, while others have fully specified evaluation reports on running or completed programs in a country. The wide range of disseminated information implies that some donors allow a more in-depth analysis of their bilateral relations, while others call for a more general analysis. Using solely the reports published on internet gives limited information of 'practice on the ground'.

Additionally the research is limited to the donor side of the bilateral relations and allows space for a donor-biased interpretation of the practice of ownership. A countering balance attempt leads to the use of several external sources from various developmental actors. More importantly throughout the research there will be an appeal for further research. The dynamics and complexity of the concept requires the initiation of a comprehensive field research, providing a clearer portrait of what is taking place in bilateral relations.

The further research would be guided by the concept as it is developed with indicators and such in chapter three. The proposed field work would focus on interviewing relevant actors in the bilateral relations, ranging from donors, to recipient governments and the stakeholders (representing also the poor and marginalized) present in that particular country. Furthermore research would require a closer look at the entire process of bilateral relations and how ownership nestles itself therein. An example for further research would be to look at the ownership of resources, an aspect filled with power differentials. Donors could say that the recipient government has full access to the funds and resources. Research would then look into aspects such as timing surrounding disbursement of funds and predicting funds; seeing whether decisions are made prior to the proposal of recipient government budgets. This would uncover where power is seized and therefore also how ownership is fostered. Further research would

follow along several of these issues and in this paper at several moments there are calls for further research.

1.5 A further outline

The outline of the paper will be along the following lines. Firstly, to establish how ownership was introduced into development co-operation. Subsequently ownership is broken down into various elements and concepts which are reconstructed around a framework to enhance the understanding of ownership. This framework is used to view and assess how donors have conceptualized ownership in their policies and strategies and also how the practice of these donors is with regards to ownership in bilateral relations. At the end conclusions are presented to bind the outcomes found in the analysis to the theory around ownership.

2. Ownership in a development atmosphere

"Development is not only about interpreting and delivering the things that people need; it is about the people themselves. [...] In the barrios, slums, desert villages and urban housing projects are poor people who have not just needs, but also unique existences, expertise and cultures as powerful – in many ways, more powerful – that those of richer peoples. If development cared to recognize this, then it would be run differently. We would not only seek to interpret the needs of the poor people, but to compare worldviews and co-develop our mutual well-being and responsibility." (Patta Scott-Villiers, 2004: 204)

Interpretation and delivery have been issues underpinning the call for ownership in foreign aid. Addressing needs of the 'poor', seemingly seen by donors in the late nineties as poverty reduction and no longer 'development', sparked a global search for modes of delivery; modes that due to the nature of this aid (tax money of donor constituents) called for a high degree of effectiveness. The 'aid effectiveness' agenda was however not solely driven by the nature of aid, but much more by a common frustration among the international community that aid was simply not making the difference (Hout, 2004: 595, Christiansen and Hovland, 2003: 21). Seeing how ownership inched its way into the 'aid effectiveness' agenda, will provide the context for auxiliary analysis.

2.1 Contextualizing ownership

Development co-operation in the past decades displays a range of approaches to providing aid for development and poverty reduction in developing countries. Approaches were led by nationalisation in the sixties, donor-driven projects in the seventies, privatisation under structural adjustment (SAP) in the eighties and a focus on ownership during the nineties (Foster, 2000: 7). The ownership debate of the nineties is fed primarily by the problematic nature of conditionalities, the fungibility of aid and questions of aid effectiveness.

The conditionalities imposed under the SAPs in the eighties were not paying off, which was partly related to them being "paper conditionalities", and as such not followed by the recipient governments (Holst, 2002: 8). On the other hand the task of monitoring all

the conditionalities proved to be unfeasible for donors (Hout, 2004: 595). Linked is the ever-present notion of 'fungibility'. Fungibility means that aid (partially) substitutes the recipient government budgets, releasing (financial) resources that were taken up in the budgets. Aid then allows the recipient government the possibility of using their own resources on other projects (Devarajan and Swaroop, 1998: 3). Due to this releasing of own funds, countries could still pursue their own policies. Fungibility would always remain present in aid relations; donors can simply not force recipient governments to follow certain paths. They can only enforce conditionalities, yet as mentioned these were also not providing the necessary outcomes (Hout, 2004: 595). Triggered by this notion as Hout mentions, several reports were written about aid effectiveness and the relation with policies (Burnside and Dollar, 1997; World Bank, 1998) (ibid.: 596). Here ownership became part of the debate as a means to delivering more effective aid. Conditionalities were not functioning and fungibility was a problem. To solve this it was thought that leaving space to recipient countries and operating more at policy level would create a 'friendlier' dialogue between the 'partners' (Radelet, 2006: 14-5); dialogue would possibly decrease fungibility and increase effectiveness.

These issues of aid effectiveness were paralleled by discussions regarding the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. This debt relief initiative by donors and International Financial Institutes (IFI's) at the end of the nineties attempted to link debt relief to poverty reduction. Due to rising critique on the first HIPC towards the end of the nineties the IFI's were engaged in an attempt to change the approach (Christiansen and Hovland, 2003: 37). During the nineties there was also increased attention for participation (Christiansen and Hovland, 2003: 20) combined with a call for more 'recipient ownership' due to failed conditionalities (Holst, 2002: 8).

Within the WB at the same time there was attention for a more 'holistic' approach to development, pressed for by Wolfensohn (WB president) himself in his speech "The other Crisis". (Wolfensohn, 1998) His ideas prompted the Comprehensive Development

Framework[3] (CDF) upon which in later stages the well-known Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) were built, (Christiansen and Hovland, 2003: 34) that would focus on issues of participation and ownership (Saxby, 2003: 1). These same PRSPs would go on to be the basis for bilateral relations for many donors.

Consequently various strands brought ownership on the agenda of the international community; from failed conditionalities to a debate surrounding the coming of PRSPs. Aid effectiveness was now dependent on a follow-up of this new approach. Follow-up came in the form of the Monterrey Consensus (2003) and the most recent attention to ownership as a way to increase aid effectiveness was in the Paris Declaration (2005).

Ownership clearly became important for the donors. That is, as a way to aid effectiveness. A final issue requiring attention of donors was 'selectivity'. Ownership would be followed, yet simultaneously studies were showing the importance of good policies.

2.2 Selection at the doorstep of bilateral relations

Results-oriented approaches led to an attempt to make sure that the aid would really be effective. Ownership would not just be 'promoted', it would be promoted in those countries where aid would be more effective and this depended on the presence of good policies. By concentrating aid on a 'selective' amount of countries, donors would be able to increase results and make them more visible. This focus on policies was triggered by two earlier mentioned reports from the WB (one of the leaders in development co-operation), *Aid, Policies and Growth* (1997) and *Assessing Aid* (1998) (Hout, 2004: 596).

The so-called 'selectivity' debate meant to a large extent that aid is given to countries pursuing good policies and 'good governance'. The meaning and deliberations surrounding these carriers of selectivity will not be discussed in detail since the purpose

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[3] CDF is an approach proposing more effective poverty reduction and is led by four principles: long-term, holistic vision; country ownership; country-led partnership; results focus.(World Bank, 2006)

here is to identify the issues around ownership. It will suffice to say that the good policies related primarily to issues of fiscal, monetary and economic nature (Hout, 2004: 606) and that 'good governance' is widely accepted as being based on the following nine characteristics: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and lastly strategic vision (Abdellatif, 2003: 5).

Policy selectivity has not convinced the entire development community to be a factor for aid effectiveness, the reason being two-fold. Firstly, studies show selectivity being based more on geo-strategic and geopolitical aspects, colonial history, smaller countries and commercial interests (Alesina and Dollar, 2000: 55; Roodman, 2005: 15) therefore questionably related to effectiveness. Secondly, growing concern for poverty reduction consistently sparked dialogue whether there should not be a shift to 'poverty selectivity' (Dollar and Levin, 2004: 6). Realization dawned that if the poorest countries are left alone due to bad policies, the effects would be carried primarily by the extreme poor. Poverty selectivity would imply providing aid to countries with 'bad governance' but leaving them less sovereignty to not compromise the effectiveness of aid.

Tracing back to the starting point, the question returns; is it about needs of people or effective modes of delivery? Is there a search for the most effective way to deliver aid so that donors 'perform' well, promoting ownership as an aid-effectiveness-instrument? Is ownership then a "means to an end" (Lavergne, 2003: 4; de Valk et al., 2005: 21) or can it genuinely be a means and an end to the donors. Is ownership, within the debate of aid effectiveness, about the most effective way to deliver aid to those in need, or is it about donors being effective in letting people own their development, their ways to reduce poverty?

Being able to answer that question requires diving into the concept of ownership and grasping its meaning with which various donors can be analyzed. Doing that will possibly help answer whether development co-operation has not lost track of people and has focused too much on numbers.

3. Ownership revisited: constructing good intentions

"How people think and what they say do matter, and can become the groundwork for new ways of doing things. This is why discourse is so powerful, and worth unpacking, challenging and redefining." (Chambers and Pettit, 2004: 142)

Distinguishing between ownership as a means or an end and discovering what this implies for the people requires a more in-depth look at the concept of ownership. This can facilitate a move from elusiveness to a more practical view that could assist donors in bilateral aid relations.

The in-depth look into ownership traces it into the legal realm and discussions of property rights and issues of land rights (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 29). Ownership is accompanied by certain legal rights for the owner. The owner can in principal do with his/her property as they please. Naturally it is also the owner's 'duty' not to infringe on the rights of others. Moving from individual property, to a broader perspective where multiple stakeholders hold rights and duties, issues of power, participation and capacity arise. Stakeholders must participate in their respective rights and duties. Within these stakeholder relations power differentials arise, requiring capacity to be aware of and deal with power.

Similarly these issues arise with ownership in bilateral aid relations. There are different stakeholders with rights and duties and they must deal with three issues: power, participation and capacity. Saxby refers to these issues as well, stating that "ownership refers to relations among stakeholders in development[4], particularly their respective capacity, power or influence to set and take responsibility for a development agenda, and to muster and sustain support for that" (Saxby, 2003: 2).

Utilizing the considerable vagueness of Saxby's definition, a deeper view is taken at the relations among the stakeholders to achieve a better understanding of ownership in bilateral aid. This entails breaking up ownership into two different types and looking

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[4] Stakeholders in development constitute of for example local government, NGO's, local GRO's and beneficiaries.

within those two different types of ownership at the dimensions of ownership and the challenges of power, participation and capacity. All these aspects are combined in an analytical framework.

3.1 Typology

The two-way approach to ownership is based on the focus of government-to-government bilateral relations. Firstly, the 'less complicated' option is seeing ownership as 'government ownership'. This entails a donor – recipient government relation where in the aid effectiveness debate, ownership should be held by the recipient government. However inside a country, the government shares concern for development with various stakeholders. Labeled as 'country ownership' the more complicated situation arises due to different interests and roles of stakeholders. To grasp better the meaning of these two types of ownership, both are described in more detail, first government ownership and then country ownership.

As with many issues in the development arena complexity to pin down an exact definition of much contested and dynamic concepts remains a reality. Therefore the following views depict a less rigid 'definition' providing a useful starting point. "Government ownership is at its strongest when the political leadership and its advisers, with broad support among agencies of state and civil society, decide of their own volition that policy changes are desirable, choose what these changes should be and when they should be introduced, and where these changes become built into parameters of policy and administration which are generally accepted as desirable" (Killick et al., 1998: 87).

'Broad support' here is not so much a 'full participation' of different stakeholders, but more a 'sovereign' situation in which the elite within that particular country support decisions of the government.

Using the same view presented above, country ownership is when the "political leadership" and various other stakeholders, including even the marginalized and/or

socially excluded citizens, "decide, choose and change the desirable" (Killick et al., 1998: 87). 'Participation' then takes place at various instances of the development agenda and entails that the government not only deals with donors, but simultaneously ensures the upholding of a country-wide development agenda by various stakeholders.

Before seeing the issues of participation, the power involved and the capacities needed, a closer look is taken at various instances where ownership is important; the dimensions of ownership.

3.2 *Distinct dimensions*

The typology of government vs. country ownership leads to several dimensions useful in explaining ownership further. These dimensions are introduced by Lopes and Theisohn, which build on topics raised by studies done for SIDA by Edgren (2003) and others. Discrepancies between the two types of ownership are captured in proposed indicators (displayed in tables after each dimension). Several instances lead to similar indicators, largely due to the fact that within the bilateral relations the recipient government is considered to be a major stakeholder. These indicators serve as a tool to assess in later stages the donor side of the bilateral relations.

The first dimension is *'ownership of ideas and strategies'* (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 30). This is shared by different partners and the transferring of ideas or strategies takes place through dialogue and persuasion. Enhancement of government ownership involves the need for political will and essential in country ownership is the commitment of stakeholders.

Ideas/ strategies	Government initiative	Stakeholder initiative
	Demonstrated political will to be involved	Commitment of stakeholders

The second dimension is *'ownership of processes'* (ibid.). Important here is who takes initiative, control and responsibility in processes such as design, implementation and monitoring. The sole discrepancy between the two types of ownership here is whether it is the government or the stakeholders that 'lead' the various processes.

Processes	Government initiative	Stakeholder initiative
	Government controls implementation	Stakeholders control implementation
	Government controls monitoring	Stakeholders control monitoring

The third dimension is *'ownership of resources'* (ibid.). Since in many situations the larger part of the budget for programs/projects comes from donors, important is that provided resources can be 'controlled' either by government or stakeholders through mechanisms such as 'untied' aid, Sector Wide Approaches (SWAP) and General Budget Support (GBS).[5] Additionally the contributions of various stakeholders are imperative and play a large role in sustainability, since their resources are part of the program/project.

Resources	Shift towards more untied aid	Shift towards more untied aid
	Shift towards SWAP/GBS	Shift towards SWAP/GBS
	Contribution of government (financial, human etc.)	Contribution of stakeholders (financial, human etc.)

The last dimension is *'ownership of outcomes'* (ibid.). Here the aspects of attribution and accountability come into play. Both types of ownership have similar indicators albeit that with country ownership multiple stakeholders are accountable.

Outcomes	Attribution of program to government	Attribution of program to stakeholders
	Accountability of government	Accountability of stakeholders

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[5] Untied aid refers to the required buying or using of donor goods and services; SWAP entails support going to specific sectors, such as health or education, within which the government decides the use of funds; GBS means a provision of funds to the general government budget, giving space to use funds accordingly.

The four dimensions of ownership combined with the divergence between 'government' and 'country' provide a basis for discussing the challenges; namely power, participation and capacity.

3.3 *Capacity to participate in a realm of power?!*

Embedded in the notion of ownership are three inter-related concepts that are both compositional corner stones of ownership as well as potential challenges for all parties involved to deal with: power, participation and capacity development. Though the title here may propose some sort of linear process in which people need capacity to participate to deal with power structures, it could just as well be turned around to say that power has to be dealt with and is needed to participate in turn building capacities. It is therefore not a matter of linearity, but as the small picture proposes, the concepts form a dynamic arena upon which and in which ownership is fostered.
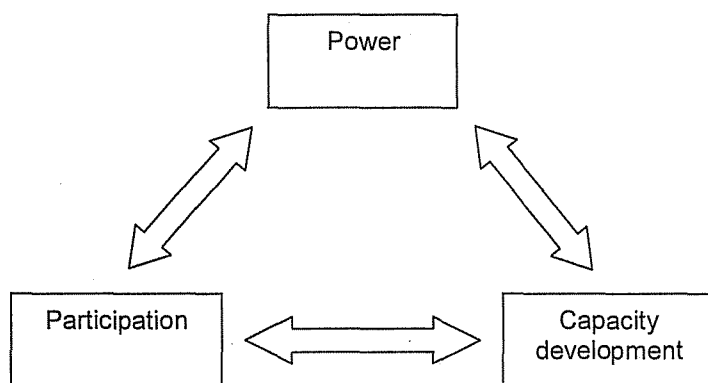
Admittedly these concepts themselves have within development and social sciences been thoroughly debated, reviewed and contested and could therefore be grounds for separate papers. In light of this, there will not be an attempt to exhaustively discuss each concept, but primarily show how these concepts are related to ownership. For example power will entail issues such as donor coordination, conditionality, accountability and transparency. Capacity development will deal with capacity building of various parties involved depending on the type of ownership. Lastly, participation will deal with issues of empowerment and citizenship. Each of the concepts is identified with several indicators to display the relation with ownership and provides a means to assess donor performance. Naturally the limitations of data imply that possibly not all indicators can be reviewed in the analysis. However what is presented here also forms the basis for further research,

which would then be used to answer to unanswered indicators. Having said this, a dive into the concepts is taken.

Power

Social sciences has for many years attempted to lay its finger on 'power' without any advancement, which in many cases leads to using the term "routinely and unreflectively, without fear of the dangers of unresolved complexity" (Waters, 1994: 217). This complexity is carried to the field of development, where in the complex dynamics and relations of the aid system, power is a fundamental issue, yet in practice is often left aside (Chambers and Pettit, 2004: 137). There is a shift taking place in development thinking, due to the baggage of experience, to "seeing more clearly that procedures are linked with power and relationships, and that acknowledging power and working on relationships are central issues in doing better in development" (Chambers, 2005: 66). Lopes and Theisohn state this even sharper mentioning "while widely regarded as intangible, mindsets, vested interests and power differentials may make the biggest contribution to development success or failure" (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 5).

Realizing the centrality of power entails that ownership, which refers to dynamics and relations in the aid system, should not and cannot be discussed without looking at power. Jerve acknowledges this stating that ownership "refers to roles and responsibilities and ultimately to power, and denotes a bundle of rights in a process of planned development; in setting the agenda, in allocating resources, and in designing and implementing development programmes" (Jerve et al., 2005: 11).

Recognizing the significance of the concept an attempt is made to dig deeper into the meaning of power in the context of ownership, keeping in mind though that the concept remains highly debated and contested. Therefore what follows is not an extensive debate on all the issues of power, but solely three ways of looking at power that will help in formulating indicators. These indicators are in turn used to assess power in the relationship between donors and recipient countries. The three forms or faces of power

are decision-making, agenda-setting and thought-control and can be traced back to the realm of political sciences (Heywood, 2002: 11). The choice of power in political sciences is fed largely by the political nature of ownership in bilateral aid.

As Haugaard mentions, power as decision-making was introduced by Dahl (1961) in his book *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. Dahl stated that "power terms refer to subsets of relations among social units such that the behaviors of one or more units (the responsive units, R) depend in some circumstances on the behavior of other units (the controlling units, C[6])" (Haugaard, 2002: 10). This entails that the "conscious actions" of people can in some way influence the "content of decisions" (Heywood, 2002: 11). In terms of donors fostering ownership, this face of power can be seen through the existence of conditionalities embedded in the bilateral relation.

These conditionalities can either be "fiduciary conditionality" related to funding and the "performance of public financial management and accountability" and/or "policy conditionality" where the "country pursues particular policies" in return for aid (DFID, 2005: 5). The conditionalities are placed on recipient countries that need aid and donors exercise power in this way on the decisions made regarding the policy level or operational level. They influence the decision-making with the incentive of aid. Additionally, this form of power finds its way back to the first two dimensions of ownership mentioned earlier, in that decision-making is related very much to initiative of actors and their control.

A response to power presented by Dahl was introduced by Bachrach and Baratz saying that power also involved an aspect of 'non-decision-making' or agenda-setting (Heywood, 2002: 11). They state: "of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. (However) Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 7). Subsequently even before gaining access to the realm of decision-making, decisions can

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[6] More commonly the R and C labels are substituted by A and B.

be kept off the agenda. Going back to fostering ownership, power can be recognized in the subordination that donors have for recipient country priorities and plans as well as the existence of transparency and openness within the bilateral relation. Furthermore power relates to the third dimension of ownership, namely the resources and especially issues of 'tied aid' and SWAP/GBS, where donors can spend thematically and therefore set the agenda.

The last form of power also came as a response to the above mentioned authors and as Haugaard mentions, was established by Lukes (1974) in *Power: A radical view*. Lukes defines power by saying that "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (Haugaard, 2002: 50). This is "the ability to influence another by shaping what he or she thinks, wants or needs; an ideological indoctrination" (Heywood, 2002: 11). Captured in light of fostering ownership, the thought-control is about how the ideology of the PRSP is one of the drivers of bilateral aid relations. The PRSP process can be seen as having a 'political agenda' that can be "interpreted as an attempt to influence domestic political processes in a progressive direction" largely related to thinking that state effectiveness (the state being a decisive agent in development) would lead to a decrease in poverty (Piron and Evans, 2004: 4). The PRSP is then a process that can change political systems to make this poverty reduction happen (ibid.).

These three forms of power do to some extent have different implications for both government and country ownership. Especially with country ownership, not only the relation between donor and recipient government exists, but also the interest and mindsets within a country. The nature of this research does not allow for a further thorough review of all of these issues within a country, but they would require attention in further field-research. For now it will suffice to provide the following overview of indicators which will offer an initial opportunity to assess the donors when it comes to ownership.

Power	Existence of conditionality	Existence of conditionality
	Subordination to governm ent priorities and plans	Subordination to stakeholder priorities and plans
	Transparency and openness	Transparency and openness
	Use of PRSP	Use of PRSP

Realizing the existence and nature of power is a first step in helping donors identify power and offer a better picture of how to deal with the implication. Having reviewed the concept of power, participation requires examining to view its relation to power and capacity and its influence on ownership.

Participation

Participation, similar to power, is highly debated in the development atmosphere. It is difficult to grasp the full debate on this concept in one research paper, so it will suffice to discuss several of the main issues within the debate necessary for the notion of ownership. From the onset it is obvious that participation must be argued as necessary for ownership. Participating is what allows actors to bring in their ideas and contributions and be part of the processes; it allows them to define their 'path of development'. Immediately it becomes clear that this relates to power, since this involvement of actors is about decision-making, agenda's and interests; "participation is about power" (Chambers, 2005: 105).

Participation as discussed here is very much related to country ownership and the involvement of various stakeholders. This does not rule out the relation with government ownership, be it that several issues mentioned are either less or differently applicable to government ownership. (When reading about individuals or groups one could also relate it to governments.) Where necessary the distinction is made.

Embedded in the concept of participation, which also relates to power, are notions of empowerment and citizenship. Important here is to mention the closer relation to country ownership and the stakeholders within that country that are less prone to

having 'the power to participate, or being able to participate in the realm of power'. Naturally within the government there also exist large power differentials requiring the 'empowerment' of a certain group or ministry. Empowerment in that sense is also a form of capacity development, which is examined after participation.

People that are 'empowered' increasingly participate, yet the reverse similarly holds true that through participation people get empowered. "Participation as a process of empowerment can help amplify traditionally unacknowledged voices" (Slocum et al., 1995: 5). Here ownership enters; in that when people start 'owning' a process, individuals or groups become 'empowered' to "identify and shape their lives and the kind of society in which they live" (Slocum et al., 1995: 4).

Grasping empowerment as a notion within participation related to ownership leads to the use of the following two definitions. The first is provided by Wils, based on work of Friedman, Galjart and Stiefel & Wolfe, who sees "empowerment as involving participation in decision-making on matters important to the empowered subjects" (Wils, 2001: 7). Inside the definition a power component is captured in that decision-making allows for alternative choices even when others would not approve of it (Wils, 2001: 7). Feeling that the choice is their own can enhance the ownership within the country. The second definition is by Chambers emphasizing that "empowerment means transforming the normal bureaucratic reflexes to standardize, simplify and control in a dominating top-down mode to provide instead conditions for local diversity, complexity and autonomy" (Chambers, 2005: 73). Chambers adds to the dimension of empowering people, a proactive opportunity for the government within a country to create empowerment; in bilateral relations there is the proactive opportunity to allow the empowerment of the government and other stakeholders within a country.

Empowerment leads to the concept of citizenship, applicable to country ownership. Through empowerment citizens gain power in the decision-making process and they should exercise this within a country. Citizenship is where citizens are to develop into agents that play a role in policy's and the decision-making process around it and directly

influence and control governance (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999: 4). Important in the concept of citizenship are the citizens themselves. Gaventa defines these as being the "rightful and legitimate claimants" (Gaventa, 2002: 2) of development. Creating space for citizens and empowering them helps "to deepen the ways in which ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies which directly affect their lives" (Fung and Wright, 2001: 7).

Having citizens participate in decision-making, influencing the policies and processes that affect their lives, does pave the way for an increased 'sense of' ownership. However caution is required so as to not "evoke a feel-good factor amidst considerable vagueness about what exactly was implied" (Cornwall, 2000: 26). As seen above, different relationships also imply different interests. Citizens are not a homogenous group with similar needs. Multiple groups will have interests and it is a challenge for a government to put all these together in one development agenda which is owned by the country and financed in part by donor governments. Though involvement by all might be the panacea, it is obvious that practice can be "virtually impossible to achieve, or so cumbersome and time-consuming that everyone begins to lose interest" (ibid.: 55).

The danger then is that with wanting to 'own' so much by having total citizen participation, in the end nothing happens due to totally diverging interests. Attempting to work a balance between the two in search of finding an ideal situation is necessary and is a process depending on the country and context. No two situations are identical. Government authorities need to respond with possible institutional changes and generate the political will to "convert professed commitment to participation into tangible actions" (ibid.: 57). On the other hand there have to be "strategies that build and support collectivities that can continue to exercise voice, and exert pressure for change" (ibid.: 57-8).

Examining some issues within participation helps in identifying so-called levels of participation. Chambers mentions these levels of participation created by Arnstein (1969) in the form of a ladder and they include the following range of participation:

manipulation; therapy; informing; consultation; placation; partnership; delegated power and lastly citizen control (Chambers, 2005: 105). (For government ownership the last form mentioned would be government control.) Knowing however the role that power plays within participation, one has to keep in mind that these ladders should be "qualified by ladders of equity" (Chambers, 2005: 107), so as to not lose sight of possible power inequalities amongst various stakeholders.

The available data and reliance on secondary data does not allow this paper to see all the issues mentioned above under the concept of participation; complex dynamics of participation within a country would require large amounts of additional research. The discussion should be seen as offering some insight into what the author believes genuine ownership should be about. A study involving all issues reviewed would necessitate further field research. For this research the following indicators are introduced to give some insight into participation within ownership.

Participation	Involvement of government during various stages	Involvement of stakeholders during various stages
	Level on ladder of participation	Level on ladder of participation

Power and participation now lead to the last interrelated concept, capacity development. Interrelated due to the fact that capacity is needed to participate, which can help deal with power and vice versa capacity 'empowering' individuals, groups or the government to participate.

Capacity development

Capacity building as a concept emerged at the start of the nineties as an improved form to technical assistance. "Lack of capacity was one of the root causes of poverty; in government, to design and implement proper development strategies, and in society, to hold government accountable for its actions" (World Bank, 2005: 7). As with other concepts many different definitions came up in an attempt to operationalize what was being said. Eade on a more individual level saw the building of capacity as "identifying the constraints that women and men experience in realizing their basic rights, and finding appropriate vehicles through which to strengthen their ability to overcome the

causes of their exclusion and suffering" (Eade, 1997: 24). In a more broad sense Gunnarson quotes Morgan (1993) who viewed capacity building as being "the ability of individuals, groups, institutions, organizations and societies to identify and meet development challenges over time" (Morgan in Gunnarson, 2001: 17). Building thereon Fukuda-Parr utilizes the UNDP (1997) definition viewing capacity-building as "the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to: 1) perform core functions, solve problems, and define and achieve objectives; and 2) understand and deal with their development needs and in a broad context and in a sustainable manner" (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002: 69).

What is worth noting in the last two views, which are recurrent lately in literature on capacity building, is the aspect of 'over time' and 'sustainability'. Precisely these aspects lead to a choice of the concept 'capacity development' denoting a sense of process. This calls for a realization amongst donors that it is not a swift 'building' and moving on, but a slow "endogenous strengthening of existing capacities and assets" (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 1) that is allowed to "have its own momentum" (Boesen and Therkildsen, 2004: 61) and can produce at times "relatively intangible and often uncertain results" (Lavergne and Saxby, 2001: 4).

Though appearing strange in a results-oriented aid system, one should become conscious of the fact that many countries and societies, including those now known as donor countries, have grown over time, "following their own logic and building on their own resources and strengths" (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002: 8). These same 'developed' countries now require complete systems and societies to be built in the span of several years. (IOG, 2001: 10) One brief issue to be mentioned here is the relation again with power, since capacity soon touches "power differentials" and is "subject to political influence and vested interests" (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 1).

Apparent in the definitions are the several levels at which capacity development can take place. Literature suggests in some cases four levels: individual, organization, institutional and societal (Lavergne and Saxby, 2001: 7; IOG, 2001: 8) while others

identify a less complex three levels: individual, institutional and societal (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002: 9). Here it will suffice to use the latter one.

The individual level entails "enabling individuals to embark on a continuous process of learning" (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002: 9). The institutional level "involves building on existing capacities, not constructing new institutions, but seeking out existing initiatives and encouraging these to grow" (ibid.). Lastly the societal level involves a "transformation for development, or creating opportunities that enable people to use and expand their capacities to the fullest" (ibid.).

A last remark is made with regards to the capacity of the donors themselves to be able to foster all the aspects mentioned in power, participation and capacity development and through that enhance ownership. Chambers underlines that "their own rules, regulations and lack of staff limited and still limit their capacity to disburse" (Chambers, 2005: 44). The issues mentioned under capacity development have been formed into the following indicators.

Capacity	Developing individual capacity	Developing individual capacity
	Developing organizational capacity	Developing organizational capacity
	Developing institutional capacity	Developing institutional capacity
	Donor capacity to foster ownership	Donor capacity to foster ownership

Through the complexity and dynamics of the concepts defined, it maybe complicated to remember the relation between all of them. A brief recap and the presentation of a framework should help to focus again.

3.4 The building blocks compiled

Ownership involves a great deal of dynamics and relations and an attempt has been made at breaking up and rebuilding the concept to create an enhanced understanding within the arena of bilateral relations. Following here is a framework, composed of the different elements presented. Though apparently a process, the arrows here simply denote both types of ownership running through the different dimensions of ownership. It is not meant as moving from one dimension to the next, but rather that dealing with these different dimensions has its implications for donors. Furthermore the corner stones of ownership: power, participation and capacity development, are placed underneath to demonstrate how throughout typology and dimensions, these challenges are evident. The seemingly static nature of the challenges can be deceiving; as was examined earlier these challenges are in a constant dynamical change.
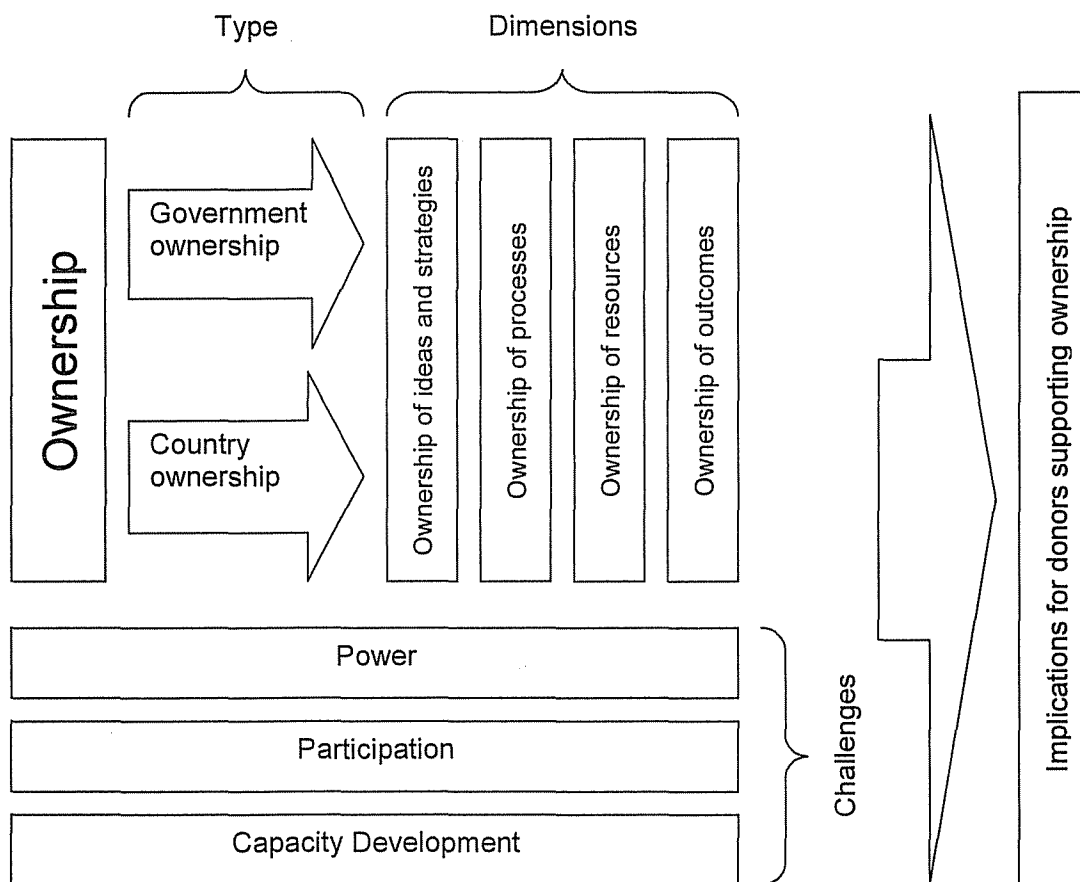

Figure 1 Analytical Framework

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4. Developing grandiloquence?!

> *"[...] at the heart of the dilemma of aid is the notion of the gift. Always inadequately clothed in new policy garb (the rubric of cooperation, partnership or ownership), the logic of the gift constantly recalls the inequalities, power and patronage that new aid policy seeks to erase."*
> *(Eyben, in Mosse and Lewis, 2005: 20)*

Theorizing and conceptualizing ownership in a way that disregards the dilemma of the gift is a process that requires careful attention and consideration and it is easy to fall into the trap mentioned by Eyben. Theorizing ownership put forth numerous challenges and taking one step further into devising policies or strategies can be cumbersome. During the process realization quickly dawns that even if handled with care, numerous factors such as economics, politics and organizational aspects arise. Donors mention in policies and strategies the need and importance of ownership; and donor conferences, gatherings and declarations[7] are devoted to practically 'enforcing' a sense of ownership. Yet behind this façade of willingness and togetherness, there are individual differences flowing forth into policies and strategies for development co-operation.

These differences are rooted in issues such as the political nature of the donor governments, the internal affairs (for example the economic situation) within the donor countries, the approaches to development co-operation and certain beliefs or views underlying development co-operation, based on research and past experiences.

Adding to individual differences the 'fuzzy' nature of ownership and its seemingly stretched applicability, the willingness towards enhancing or promoting ownership soon displays its precincts. Revealed here are the conceptualizations of individual donors and the translation thereof into policies and strategies for development co-operation. The overview is pursued by an analysis of the relation between concepts and theory of ownership.

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[7] Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness, 2005

4.1 The donors' brainchild

Ownership as defined by different donors appears at first sight to be relatively similar. Taking a closer look at the documents, with regards to policies and strategies, reveals certain individual differences. The information inside these documents, relating to ownership of the five donors, is identified in the following paragraphs. The sequence of donors is random and has no particular significance.

Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA)

The NMFA uses the OECD definition of ownership, stating it is "the effective exercise of partners' authority over their development programmes including when they rely on external resources to implement them" (IOB, 2006: 125).

Reading through an evaluation report of the IOB (Evaluations Department), the Dutch government pays a lot of attention to the political realities within a recipient country, such as the complexity of internal power and alliances, "fragile internal political relations" and issues of clientelism (ibid.: 123-4). Besides, the PRSP is used instrumentally to promote ownership, combined with the use of General Budget Support, increased aid predictability and decreased conditionality of this support (ibid.: 126).

The NMFA states the importance of "extensive consultations with citizens and civil society"[8] and the IOB report states the importance of good governance combined with a certain amount of aid selectivity (IOB, 2006: 42).

Sweden, SIDA

SIDA published a report, "Sida at Work" discussing ownership in terms of meaning and practice for development co-operation. SIDA sees ownership as the recipient "taking control over design, implementation and monitoring" (SIDA, 2005: 20). Within this definition a distinction is made between three levels, namely policy level, implementation level and impact level (ibid.: 19). SIDA recognizes the existence of

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[8] *http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/ontwikkelingssamenwerking,attentieblokdocs/jargon_verklaard/ ownership.html* 18th August 2006

power stating that the "'power of the purse' tends to be reduced in favor of the 'power of the owner'" (Molund, 2000: 8).

The report "Ownership in Focus", raises several issues concerning ownership: 'partners' will have full rights to the resources "within the framework" (ibid.: 4) of SIDA, merged with full responsibility to participate and implement on their own initiative; SIDA places importance on the participation and support (also financial) of different stakeholders; the owner should request and be responsible for planning and implementation combined with a strong commitment helping ownership to "grow over time" (ibid.); furthermore both the parties have both rights and duties, however SIDA holds a claim to the so-called "legal rights" (ibid.); and lastly "assistance should be subordinated to domestic priorities and plans" requiring an "extensive process of consultation and participation" (ibid.: 5). In conclusion SIDA utilizes the PRSP to promote ownership and places emphasis on the key criteria being "government accountability to citizens" with a focus on genuine influence of the poor in processes, outcomes and implementation (SIDA, 2005: 38-9).

United Kingdom, DFID
DFID, aligned with other donors, pursues country ownership through the use of the PRSP and focuses specifically on policy processes. DFID defines country ownership as being the country having leadership over its development policies; consulting its citizens to define poverty reduction programs; and allowing civil society and poor people to have a "voice and stake in their development" with accountability of the government towards its citizens (DFID, 2005: 10).

DFID pursues the making of agreements with recipient governments on the purpose of aid and on benchmarks used to assess progress. DIFD then should not impose policy choices and make aid more predictable. Further emphasis is placed on transparency, public decision-making, supporting participation and evidence-based policymaking (ibid.: 2).

DFID recognizes the concerns regarding power imbalance and genuine autonomy, but it is believed that openness and transparency are tools that will offset this imbalance (ibid.: 12).

United States of America (USA), USAID

USAID works along five core goals mentioned in their 'Policy Framework for Bilateral Aid'. They are to: "Promote transformational development, Strengthen fragile states, Support strategic states, Provide humanitarian relief and Address global issues and other special, self-standing concerns" (USAID, 2006: 1-2). Within these five goals ownership is promoted through participation in the formulation and design of aid, leaving aside any clear definition of ownership. USAID promotes ownership by building on the "leadership, participation and commitment of a country and its people" (ibid.: 23) and priority is given to "policies, institutions and absorptive capacity" (ibid.: 8). Additionally commitment and policy performance are important for ownership according to USAID, which also promotes ownership through the use of "broad sectoral earmarks" (ibid.: 8).

Australia, AusAID

AusAID published a whitepaper 'highlighting' the issue of ownership. Ownership is seen as being aligned with the priorities of the recipient government, having aid programs "championed by local people", involving beneficiaries in design and implementation and finally being aligned with the recipient government budget and systems (AusAID, 2006: 22).

Promotion of ownership implies jointly agreeing with 'partners' on issues of implementation and having 'partners' assume a "greater share of responsibility for all stages of development" (ibid.: 65). The role of AusAID is reviewing and creating dialogue. Moreover aid given to recipient countries should be untied and "in stronger settings with adequate safeguards, funding through government budgets will be considered" (ibid.).

4.2 *Against a theoretical backdrop*

Impressions of approaches to ownership by different donors lead to the recognition of certain incongruities in relation to the theory previously presented. The seemingly vast array of 'activities' (donor conferences etc.) surrounding the concept of ownership apparently leads to an initial underestimation by donors regarding the need to understand implications and challenges of ownership. Instead of understanding the reality of words, sporadically the tendency is to incorporate ownership simply because everyone is talking about it. Occasionally positions of donors regarding ownership are more inclined to being 'fashion-statements' rather than well thought through policies and strategies.

Certainly it is unmerited to treat all donors alike, as there are donors demonstrating in their conceptualizations a genuine effort, whether large or minute, towards understanding ownership and allowing for an authentic role in their policies and strategies. To uncover the discrepancies between donors and reveal how the conceptualization of donors relates to the theory, each of the five donors is reviewed using the analytical framework presented in figure 1. This reveals the views of donors dealing with ownership in their conceptualizations, in terms of type, dimensions and challenges of ownership. A brief overview of the donors at the beginning of each aspect demonstrates how they deal with it and following is a short deliberation of notable differences.

Typology...

Based on the conceptualizations presented in the overview a distinction is made regarding the type of ownership the donors seem to envision.

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Government ownership, adding that there should be consultation with other stakeholders.	Country ownership where all stakeholders are involved, especially including the poor and marginalized.	Country ownership with participation of citizens and stakeholders; donor is a 'valuable partner.'	Country ownership applies only to 'good countries' that are committed and have correct policy performance.	Government ownership, adding that involvement of beneficiaries is important.

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The typology is based on information apparent within the aspects of dimensions and challenges of ownership, which are to follow. Noticeable is that the NMFA and AusAID speak of 'country ownership' in their policies, but then mention almost solely the government as being the single stakeholder, which leads to typifying them under 'government ownership'. The three other donors mention country ownership, albeit that DFID and USAID require attention. DFID speaks of country ownership, yet does perceive itself as being an important partner in the process, with the recipient government in a leadership role. Practice could reveal the intricate nature of such a role. USAID stands apart from other donors. Mentioning country ownership in its policies is seemingly no more than a formality with no clear engagement of the notion. This can be led back to mentioning the 'promotion' of ownership when the USA considers the country to be 'good' and in their interest. Further clarification of these typologies is given by seeing the dimensions and challenges.

Dimensions...

Theory highlighted distinct dimensions of ownership. In their conceptualizations donors do not clearly distinguish these dimensions, causing only a general impression of the place the dimensions receive in the policies and strategies.

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Identification of dimensions is not done, but in general ownership of ideas, strategies and processes is promoted through PRSP. Ownership of resources through GBS; aid predictability and outcomes are not dealt with (IOB, 2006: 126).	The dimensions are conceptualized in a general way in the following examples: owners have to request and take initiative, owners are responsible for processes, "full rights to resources"; and commitment and financing by partners leads to ownership of outcomes (Molund, 2000: 2; SIDA, 2005: 20).	No distinct identification, but ideas, strategies and processes are to be led by government and should consult citizens, with accountability between donor and government. Aid predictability promotes resource ownership, but decisions are made together on the purpose of aid. Outcomes are assumed to be owned (DFID, 2005: 2).	No identification of various dimensions, solely ownership of resources would be promoted by using more broad sectoral earmarks (USAID, 2006: 8).	Classification of the dimensions is not done apart from a general comment that the government should "assume a greater share of responsibility for all stages of development". Ownership of resources will be promoted by increasing untied aid and GBS (AusAID, 2006: 65).

SIDA displays in their conceptualization the breaking down of dimensions, relating to a long history of research on ownership and the links with the theory of dimensions. The NMFA and DFID both do not clearly distinguish, but do pay limited attention to the dimensions. Questionable is the NMFA, among others, seeing the PRSP as the tool to promote ownership, which could be considered a contradiction based on theories described earlier. Interesting is that DFID continually in various stages sees itself in the partner role, apparently implying a certain difficulty in letting go completely and allowing 'full ownership'.

AusAID still struggles with conceptualizing ownership and reverts to more generalized statements that require a demonstration of their applicability in practice. USAID closes the line of donors with a meager promotion of broad sectoral earmarks as ownership of resources, displaying a limited engagement of areas where ownership could be promoted.

Challenges...

The challenges, being the building blocks and dynamics surrounding ownership, call for an individual review and are therefore dealt with separately.

Power				
NMFA	**SIDA**	**DFID**	**USAID**	**AusAID**
The NMFA displays a limited engagement and understanding of the complexity and reality of power within ownership. At times mentioning that governments should be in charge, at other times being driven by politics and their vision on these. (Some examples are seen below)	SIDA deals with power saying that "power of the purse is reduced in favor of power of the owner" (SIDA, 2005: 20). Missing are clear mechanisms of ways of diverting this power. This however is limited to a resource issue and further clear statements are made that recipients have no 'legal rights' (Molund, 2000: 4).	DFID is very much aware of power and the imbalance this brings along with the impediment on genuine autonomy. Openness, transparency and mutual accountability are said to be ways in which these issues can be offset (DFID, 2005: 12).	USAID does not deal with power and apparently takes it for granted evidently not recognizing its importance in bilateral relations.	AusAID is seemingly also not aware of the need to discuss power when it comes to ownership, either taking it for granted or not realizing fully how it affects the relations.

The NMFA seems to underestimate the complexity and reality of power in ownership. There is mention of the leadership role of the recipient government, but realities such as the "political reality, complex internal power and alliances, fragile internal political relations and clientelism" (IOB, 2006: 124) create a situation of increased selectivity and conditionality in aid. This quote underlines the existence of power: "Ownership moet echter niet verward worden met absolute eenzijdige zeggenschap over het geld dat donoren overdragen."[9] (translated: Ownership should not be confused with an absolute one-sided say over the money that donors provide.)

SIDA and DFID are aware of power inequalities and engage in ways to offset the balance. This engagement is however more a theoretical approach than a clear envisioning of practical measures to convey a balance. Transparency and openness are mentioned, though these can be hard to grasp in practice. However the two donors do genuinely conceptualize a need to let the 'partner countries' make the decisions. Translating this into practice is a second, more difficult step. USAID and AusAID trail behind in their understanding of power. There is no engagement into consequences or realities that power has on ownership.

Clearly seeing a range of engagement with the concept of power, participation is now examined.

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[9] *http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/ontwikkelingssamenwerking,attentieblokdocs/jargon_verklaard/ownership.htm*

Participation				
NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
The NMFA pays attention to 'participation' saying that there should be "extensive consultations with citizens and civil society".[10] Yet this is seemingly less important than the role of government in the process.	Participation of government and different stakeholders is important for SIDA. This should not be a mere consultation, but the poor should be able to genuinely influence various processes and outcomes (SIDA, 2005: 19).	Similarly DFID places importance on participation of the government, being the partner of DIFD, as well as placing importance on citizens and especially the poor to have both a "voice and stake in their development". DFID also calls for public and transparent decision-making to feed into suitable policies (DIFD, 2005: 2).	Participation is mentioned by USAID saying that ownership should be "built on the participation of a country and its people" (USAID, 2006, 23).	For AusAID participation solely entails an assumption of more responsibility along with importance to involve the beneficiaries (AusAID, 2006: 22).

All donors are clear on the 'participation' of the recipient government, albeit that USAID reserves this for 'good' countries. Taking it one step further to country ownership, and thus the participation of various stakeholders, is a 'fuzzier' step. DFID and SIDA see this as involvement of stakeholders and citizens both in voice and action. NMFA and AusAID rely more on a consultation of stakeholders, demonstrating the importance of the government for these donors. Lastly USAID simply mentions the word participation. Clearly all donors should pursue pro-active discussion and reflection to help them understand the ramifications and complexities of using the concept of participation.

Capacity development is the last concept examined as a challenge in ownership.

Capacity Development				
NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Capacity development within the framework of ownership does not receive attention.	SIDA does place importance on the strengthening of capacities of the country to enhance ownership (SIDA, 2005: 20). Furthermore there is a concrete discussion on the levels of capacity development and how ownership should be related to that (SIDA, 2005: 52).	Capacity development within the framework of ownership does not receive attention.	Capacity development at USAID is also not mentioned, be it only a pointing towards the need of increasing the absorptive capacity of the recipient government (USAID, 2006: 8).	Capacity development within the framework of ownership does not receive attention.

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[10] *http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/ontwikkelingssamenwerking,attentieblokdocs/jargon_verklaard/ownership.html*

Among all the donors only SIDA mentions capacity development in the context of ownership. USAID only discusses absorptive capacity which reflects also a vision of ownership; exclusively an absorption of donor ideas and funds.

Important to mention here is that this does not mean that donors do not work on developing the capacities in some form or another in the countries in which they operate, but simply that this is not seen in the context of ownership. Examining the concepts on ownership of the five donors uncovers some similarities and differences in ideas and approaches. In conclusion some main elements are brought out in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.3 Conceptualization 'aligned'?

Conceptualization should be handled with care and as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it is easier said than done. Reviewing the way in which the five donors reflect on ownership reveals this quite well. Different backgrounds and political realities revolving around donors lead to varying degrees of importance to enhance or promote ownership.

Donors reveal in their conceptualizations a mix of understanding ownership and the implications it has for their policies and strategies. There is a clear range from eloquent 'fashion-statements' to genuine attempts at understanding the realities and ramifications of having a policy or strategy revolving around ownership. It is evident that all five donors have somewhere in their policies mentioned the need to centralize ownership in development co-operation. Differences do however appear with some donors displaying limitations in: 1) understanding the challenges, and 2) mentioning ways or mechanisms that are or should be in place to enhance ownership. Possibly this could reveal the nature of ownership to the particular donor, whether it be ownership as a 'means or as an end'.

Based on the review of the five donors in relation to theory, SIDA shows most noticeably an understanding of ownership. This is presumably related to the vast amount of research done on the subject. DFID follows with a good understanding yet the focus on participation requires taking care in walking the thin line between being a 'partner' and exercising power. NMFA and AusAID are somewhat related in their focus on government ownership. NMFA does display supplementary knowledge and willingness to promote ownership, although this could be related to wanting to deliver aid more effectively. Trailing behind these four donors is USAID. USAID apparently struggles with the concept of ownership and almost ritually mentions it in their policies. There is limited vision of what ownership means and how it can be promoted in development co-operation.

Having seen the conceptualizations of donors, it is now time to capture the actions related to ownership providing the possibility to form a sharper picture of the five donors.

5. Practicing Intentional Development?!

"How can we depend upon gifts, loans and investments from foreign countries and foreign companies without endangering our independence? How can we depend upon foreign governments and companies for the major part of our development without giving to those governments and countries a great part of our freedom to act as we please? The truth is that we cannot." (TANU, Arusha declaration 1967: 10-11 in Mosse and Lewis, 2005: 89)

These strong words have considerable impact on the vision of 'good intentions'. Having good intentions of 'ownership' is one thing; actually fulfilling them in development co-operation is quite another. Previously reviewing the donors revealed different degrees and levels of knowledge concerning ownership in the policies and strategies of the donors. Nevertheless, as with many issues, 'actions speak louder than words'.

Solely mentioning and conceptualizing ownership, does not display the reality of an intention. Practicing this intention displays a genuine attempt in not wanting to create dependency, but allowing the 'developmental dreams of the South' to become a reality. Genuine ownership would then lead development co-operation away from a mere 'enforcement' of Northern intentions or aid effectiveness, back to what should be central; the people.

Assessing the 'practice' of ownership by donors is done through the review of evaluation reports of the respective donors. The indicators and proxy's are used to analyze different programs where possible, in several countries where this donor works. Following the analysis external reports on donors are used to further reflect on practice from another angle. Lastly, some conclusions are made in relation to the different donors.

As mentioned in the limitations of this research, the information concerning the practice of donors is narrow. It is a reflection of how the donors have evaluated themselves in certain programs in particular countries. Not all donors have equally performed evaluations focused on ownership, requiring actual fieldwork to create a better picture of each donor.

Presented here is an initial step in uncovering the practice of donors and ownership. It builds on the previous chapter showing whether or not the conceptualization on ownership is simply a 'practice of grandiloquence'.

5.1 The reality of good intentions

Limitations to this research lead to getting only partial insights inside the 'black box' of donors concerning ownership. Nonetheless getting this view is important to be able to say something more concrete about donor practice.

This analysis establishes to which extent ownership is even mentioned in evaluation reports; by itself a possible display of importance for donors. Analyzing the various countries, through the different elements of ownership, provides deeper insight into particular practices. Certainly elements not conceptualized by donors, do not emerge in practice. Still if significance is placed on ownership, even possibly limited conceptualization should be reflected in practice. A cautionary side-note once more is that this analysis is only based on the evaluation reports available online (after the year 2000) and as such are a mere initial reflection on a particular donor.

One discrepancy of importance is regarding the indicator "shift towards untied aid". This indicator makes use of the Commitment to Development Index 2006[11]. A thematic approach is used to review the different indicators. The indicators are grouped together due to the fact that not all donors conceptualize ownership the way theory presented it, and therefore the practice will also not show this. The reliance on secondary data does not allow an in-depth view into each indicator; that would require the much mentioned further research. Each aspect starts with an overview of the five donors, giving examples from various evaluation reports, followed by a discussion/explanation of the results. A start is made with the analysis of the dimensions.

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[11] *http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi*

Ideas/strategies

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Both IOB reports[12] give the impression that NMFA holds ownership, though there are differences among countries, due to political realities and choices of embassy's (IOB, 2006:75). Ugandan development plan based largely on pressure of donors (Lelieveld, 2006: 43); NMFA decided at times on important sectors even against other government proposals (IOB, 2006: 75); within NMFA's choices there is room for government initiative (ibid.: 119, 139).	The report[13] shows that the recipient government mostly takes initiative and political will is dependent on the country, with Uganda 'scoring' higher than Kenya and Tanzania (Weeks et al, 2002).	The reports[14] do not provide information that could lead to insight as to where ownership lies.	Both in Kenya[15] and Malawi[16] it is apparent that USAID holds the ownership into taking initiative in ideas and strategies (USAID, 2005: 4; USAID, 2004: 8).	The report on Papua New Guinea shows the donor as being the initiator of things (AusAID, 2005: 4) but that there is political will to be involved (ibid.: 15).

Generally noticeable is that to a high degree ownership of ideas and strategies lies with donors, except SIDA which allows (in some cases) room for the recipient country to take initiative. It should be mentioned that this does depend on the situations and political reality within a country as the NMFA encounters in various countries. There are examples where the government decides its own ways and donors struggle in dealing with this. However in a large number of countries donors have a big say in initiatives. This makes sense with regards to debate on aid effectiveness as presented before. The call for results, be it from the Bretton Woods Institutions[17], the international community or their own national governments and constituents, guides donors to take initiative ensuring proper results. Bringing in their ideas and strategies, great effort is made to guarantee that their aid in bilateral relations will make a difference in poverty reduction. The reason for SIDA fostering more ownership in this area possibly relates to a long

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[12] IOB Evaluation of SWAP, 2006 (Provides information on SWAP in partner countries of NMFA with a focus on Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Zambia); IOB Country report Uganda, 2006
[13] "Supporting Ownership", 2002 (report includes many programs and projects, so examples in SIDA columns are not specified by page number; information can be traced to this report.
[14] Evaluations of DFID Country Programmes: Bangladesh, Malawi and Mozambique
[15] Annual report of Kenya, USAID, 2005
[16] Report on GBS in Malawi, USAID, 2004
[17] BWIs consist of the World Bank Group and the IMF

history in research on ownership and development co-operation, combined with a comprehensive way of doing development (see DAC peer review Sweden, Annex B) where constituents of Sweden are involved, creating maneuvering space.

Processes

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Main initiatives lie with government (Lelieveld, 2006: 43; IOB, 2006: 139) with no information of possible stakeholder influence on the processes. Monitoring is mainly in hands of the NMFA (Lelieveld, 2006: 46,52).	Depending on country. Kenya: SIDA initiates; Uganda: SIDA/government; Tanzania: government. Formulation/implementation in Kenya: SIDA/government; Uganda: government/citizens; Tanzania: stakeholders. Monitoring finally shows similar picture, Kenya: SIDA; Tanzania: SIDA/government; Uganda: government (Weeks et al, 2002).	Similarly here there is no direct information that gives insight, only the mention of a shift towards a more "government-managed results-based system" (Batkin et al, 2006: 10).	There is no information provided that could provide insight into the practice of USAID on where the ownership of processes lies.	Taking the initiative lies with the government (AusAID, 2005: 4,7). Moving then more towards implementation it more a joint-venture between government and donor (AusAID-36, 2004: 31) and finally monitoring is in the hands of the donor (AusAID-35, 2004: 35; AusAID-36, 2004: 16, 34, 47).

Following the mentioned line of thought, clearly the area of processes demonstrates an increase in government involvement across the line of donors. What does come out again is the importance of the situation in a country. Kenya, historically having more trouble with the donors will mean that SIDA also keeps more control of processes, whereas Uganda, more prone to listening, is given more 'freedom'. Selectivity and recipient countries' functioning inline with donor visions, increasingly means recipients hold the initiative. Monitoring is again, depending on context, mostly in hands of donors, related to the focus on results. SIDA does try to establish more government ownership in the countries that are performing in line with their vision.

Resources

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Mixed picture appears with CDI 2006[18] stating 13% tied aid is weakness. IOB report does mention NMFA's shift towards more SWAP and GBS (IOB, 2006: 139), yet critical note is that project support is still dominant in some cases (ibid.: 97) and in some cases influence is bought (ibid.: 132). In Uganda there is input from sources other than donor (Lelieveld, 2006: 44).	There is an increase in use of GBS and SWAP; with regards to the CDI 2006 no information is provided.	A positive picture appears here of DFID. The CDI 2006[19] ranks the UK as first for no tied aid. Additionally the three reports mention increased generalized funding (Batkin et al, 2006: 34; Barnett et al, 2006: 26; Chapman et al, 2006: 14). Critical here is the remark that leadership in GBS is a "footprint to build influence in other areas" (Chapman et al, 2006: 15).	The CDI 2006[20] shows that 72% of the aid given by USAID is tied aid. Additionally in Malawi a beginning was made at less earmarked funds, but with a lot of conditionality. However as soon as it appeared not to work it was stopped (USAID, 2004: 4).	AusAID according to the CDI 2006[21] has 23% tied aid. In the report there is at times mention of contribution from the government (AusAID-36, 2004: 5).

Ownership of resources depicts a mixed picture of the donors. Among European/Scandinavian donors there is a decrease in tied aid, with DFID leading the group. USAID trails far behind, largely driven by the nature of the budgetary system in the USA and the control Congress has. Shifts towards more generalized systems of support are promoted by European donors, though practice shows difficulty in leaving aside quick-and-tangible results of project support; donors don't want to feel they are loosing "control". This requires some critical reflection on why generalized forms of support are being promoted. Apparently some donors are struggling with "giving up" ownership, and promoting ownership through GBS, seize the opportunity to influence in other ways; which in itself is contradictory. Enhancement of ownership in one area, then impedes it in a different sense.

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[18] *http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi/_country/netherlands* 18th October 2006
[19] *http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi/_country/united_kingdom* 18th October 2006
[20] *http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi/_country/united_states* 18th October 2006
[21] *http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi/_country/australia* 18th October 2006

Outcomes

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Not clearly defined in reports. Government is said to take over after initial phase is done and conditions have been met (IOB, 2006: 102, 133).	In Uganda mostly the government is accountable/attributed, while in Kenya it is jointly SIDA and the government. In Tanzania stakeholders are attributed, while SIDA/government are accountable (Weeks et al, 2002).	Information is lacking to examine this area, though based on the reports the assumption can be made that it is the recipient government.	There is no information provided that could provide insight into the practice of USAID on where the ownership of outcomes lies.	Outcomes in some occasions are reportedly both owned by the donor and the stakeholders (AusAID, 2005: 21,32).

This area of ownership remains rather fuzzy with inadequate information to make decisive statements. Generally donors assume that through time recipient governments or stakeholders will come to realize the 'good nature' of donor intentions and start contributing, becoming accountable and attributing the programs to themselves. Further research would be a pre-requisite to painting a clearer picture of the outcomes.

Through dimensions, the step is taken towards the challenges of ownership. As seen in the theory several issues mentioned in the dimensions flow into the challenges that ownership poses. These three challenges are examined now.

Power

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Power is not discussed upfront but is found between the lines. Conditionalites are applied to varying degrees in countries, depending also on capacity (IOB, 2006: 102, 106, 114, 132). Furthermore influence is 'bought' by providing GBS (ibid.).	In Uganda and Tanzania power plays less of a role due to 'similar' visions between donor and governments and the higher political will of these governments to work with the donor. Kenya has a history of distrust and corruption, leading higher degrees of conditionality and not subordinating to government plans (Weeks et al, 2002).	Judging the level of openness applied by DFID to offset power is difficult, but interesting is the so-called "influencing-approach" pursued by DFID (Batkin et al, 2006: 10,19; Barnett et al, 2006: 26; Chapman et al, 2006: 15). Here DFID doesn't impose policies, but researches and 'advises' as a partner.	The report on Kenya displays clearly where the power lies, with statements such as "pushing for implementation" (USAID, 2005: 4) and USAID "required actions of the government" (USAID, 2004: 8). Additionally conditionalities do exist (ibid.: 3, 4).	The reports do not give direct information for the indicators to justify conclusions with regards to where the power lies.

The complex nature and understanding of power is reflected in the practice of donors. European donors display in their conceptualization varying degrees of understanding regarding this complexity, yet in practice are to a major extent driven by their own interests and visions on development. SIDA and the NMFA show higher degrees of conditionality where they deem necessary based on their assessment of the recipient government. Additionally the NMFA with 'thematic spending' clearly selects (in some countries) for the recipient government what is envisioned for development, focusing on this and holding on to power. DFID engages in theory with issues of power, but in practice has developed into an 'invisible power donor'. Leading in GBS and focusing on being a partner, seems upfront as a step in the right direction, yet influencing and advising strongly the recipient government, shows a subtle but ever-present power differential.

In principle these power issues of the three donors can be led back to the drive for results, 'politics back home', and of course the geo-strategic interests. Yet there seems also to be an additional indirect philanthropic drive. This drive, led by international agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and at times genuine concern, leads donors to a mind-set of wanting to change the world for the good of the people, reducing poverty and improving the 'development of the less-developed', using instruments such as the PRSP to accomplish this. They believe in this and in their attempt to make changes in the world, they use their power in one form or the other to try to get this done. This is also seen in studies done by de Valk et al.; a "supply-driven assumption of knowing what is good for them" (de Valk et al., 2005: 3) Possibly critical reflection of donors themselves is necessary; judging whether it is really their job in development co-operation to 'assume' what is good and promoting this globally.

On the other side of the spectrum are AusAID and even more extreme USAID, driven in the first place by national interests; both political and economic in nature. The reports of USAID in that sense are 'drenched' in power on the donor side and provide no reflection on its role in ownership, showing only a one-way, top-down direction of bilateral relations.

The concept of power leads to participation and an examination of whether display of power in practice, runs through this element as well.

Participation

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Participation of government is present in the bilateral relations, albeit that clear understanding of this is limited. Stakeholder participation is only in the PRSP process (IOB, 2006: 128).	In most dimensions presented the government does participate and there is increased stakeholder participation in the area of processes. However type of participation is hard to distinguish (Weeks et al, 2002).	Governments do participate but the importance of stakeholder participation as presented in concept is unclear. There has been a steady decrease of funding towards civil society (Batkin et al, 2006: 23; Barnett et al, 2006: 23; Chapman et al, 2006: 19,21).	There is no clear mention made of this, apart from that the government is involved, or is following what the donors want (USAID, 2005: 3,4; USAID, 2004: 4).	The reports show that the government in various situations is involved. There is mention of a "participative approach" (AusAID-36, 2004: 12) but as to what the extent or importance of this is, cannot be stated.

Evident from the beginning is that in some form or another recipient governments participate in bilateral relations. Completely unclear in this is the nature of participation related to the ladder of participation that was presented and would require further research. Based on the review of power within bilateral relations and practice seen in the dimensions of ownership, a plausible assumption would be that involvement of recipient governments is likely not to be towards the higher end of the ladder. Similarly participation of stakeholders is only mentioned by SIDA and NMFA, with the latter being questionable as to the extent or meaning of participation, since it is related to the PRSP process. SIDA here displays an additional initial step towards involving more than only the recipient government, yet nothing can be said about the level or extent of this participation. DFID, which in their policies place so much importance on participation, needs some self-reflection, seeing their decrease in funds towards other stakeholders.

Dealing with power and being able to participate require some sort of capacity, leading to review of donor practice now.

Capacity Development

NMFA	SIDA	DFID	USAID	AusAID
Capacity development does not receive much attention; the NMFA has in some contexts a more unstructured approach to building capacity (IOB 2006, 133,137,141; Lelieveld, 2006: 50).	There is limited mention of capacity development and only an occasional capacity building is apparent (Weeks et al, 2002).	Capacity is dealt with in some way or another (Chapman et al, 2006: 19) but not in a comprehensive and complete way.	Capacity development does not receive attention in the reports.	Capacity development as a whole does not appear in the reports, but there is some individual capacity building (AusAID-36, 2004: 13) and some organizational capacity building (ibid.: 28,42).

Capacity development as a comprehensive foundation of bilateral relations is missing in the practice of all donors. Here and there some donors work on capacity building in order to obtain the results set out by them, leading to visual change. Certainly a side-note should be placed that the donors do spent time and effort working on capacity, but this is not always done in light of ownership as was seen in the theory; it is seen more as a way to bring across some technical expertise in one form or another, but not necessarily working on ways in which to develop existing capacities available in the country. This can be traced back to how donors see their role in development co-operation; promotion of capacity building to obtain more effective aid, or helping countries extend capacities that they own and want to develop in their process of development. Knowing that this might not bring the quick and tangible results requires some critical reflection on the part of donors.

A preliminary picture of practice is formed, be it that further research is needed to get a more comprehensive view into what is happening on the ground in terms of ownership in bilateral relations. An initial check of this reality is done by seeing external sources.

5.2 Scrutinizing the reality

Having seen in a broad sense the practice of donors, it is good to scrutinize the reality using sources other than those of the donor itself. As has been mentioned several times throughout this paper further field-research would be needed to get an enhanced view of what is happening on the ground. Using these external sources however will assist in getting an initial insight into how other sources view the performance of donors in relation to ownership. The sources used are peer reviews of donors done by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), a report providing an NGO perspective and finally several perception reports done by the development partners within a country.

DAC peer reviews...

DAC peer reviews are carried out every few years within the OECD countries to critically assess how donors are performing in development co-operation. This paper utilizes the synthesis of the reports giving a brief overview of each donor. Not all reports were done recently so donors might have changed in the past years and especially the older reports should be viewed in this light. Annex B provides the main points related to ownership as well as the date of review.

The NMFA is clearly focusing on aid effectiveness and results. As a donor they are concerned with the possible 'ownership as a means', but as the report mentions this strong focus on reaching results in development, by specifying themes, governance and conditionalities, could lead to a decrease in ownership by recipient governments. The report also ends with a call to emphasize the Paris Declaration more centrally in Dutch development.[22]

DFID gets a positive review from other donors, be it more on the theory side, with a need to translate this into practice. They are considered to be a leading donor on several issues, similarly requiring the need to find a balance in fostering ownership. Especially

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[22] *http://www.oecd.org/document/28/0,2340,en_2649_37413_37425308_1_1_1_37413,00.html*
18th October 2006

country ownership needs attention, due to the focus on the recipient government and not so much the citizens.[23]

SIDA appears to be seen also by its peers as being a donor with a good reputation in development and ownership. This is largely related to SIDA's history in development and the space it gets to maneuver due to a wide support of its government and Swedish citizens. Since one of the larger worries of donors is the results that have to be presented to the public, having this public support means that SIDA can enhance recipient ownership.[24]

AusAID is approached more cautiously. There are several issues that would help ownership such as alignment and decentralizing the management, but there is a substantive focus on issues that are in the interest of Australia, which is largely due also to the security situation in the region. The focus on themes and the high degree of external technical assistance call for some critical reflection on how to foster recipient ownership.[25]

The review of USAID was done four years ago. Of the above mentioned donors USAID is approached most critically and perception of ownership is not very positive. USAID is driven to a great extent by national interests relating to the power of Congress in the USA who is in charge of the budget. USAID has the largest portion of tied aid and a high portion of earmarked aid among the donors. These approaches are not very promotional for fostering ownership, but again the review was done a while back, so change may have taken place.[26]

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[23] http://www.oecd.org/document/43/0,2340,en_2649_37413_36881515_1_1_1_37413,00.html 19th September 2006

[24] http://www.oecd.org/document/15/0,2340,en_2649_37413_34950223_1_1_1_37413,00.html 19th September 2006

[25] http://www.oecd.org/document/33/0,2340,en_2649_37413_34227425_1_1_1_37413,00.html 19th September 2006

[26] http://www.oecd.org/document/23/0,2340,en_2649_37413_1836439_1_1_1_37413,00.html 19th September 2006

NGO's perspective...

The Reality of Aid report 2006[27] is a report providing information on how donors are performing in terms of foreign aid. The report includes a section in which an NGO in a donor country gives feedback on their perception of the donor. The following box presents an overview of highlights relating to ownership. Again this source is meant to provide extra outside information on how these sources perceive the donors and how they foster ownership in bilateral aid.

Donor	An NGO perspective in *Reality of Aid Report 2006...*
NMFA	The NMFA is seen as being actively involved in the Paris Declaration and in that sense seems to promote the issue of ownership. On a more critical note there is a feeling that "issues of greater importance" are not being dealt with and the tendency is to refer to limited 'good case examples' to prove progress. Additionally a question mark is placed in the sharp results-based focus. Though it can help with accountability, there is potential for undermining for example recipient ownership. (Nicole Metz, Oxfam-Novib, pg. 311)
DFID	DFID is very focused on promoting and working on the MDGs. This is complemented with a focus on low-income countries to achieve the goals. DFID is furthermore very actively involved in the Paris Declaration. The more critical note relates to the issue of counting 'debt relief' as ODA, meaning a lower amount of usable funds. Furthermore there is a suspicious look on the integration of security and development and the focus with the United States on the 'war on terror'. (Giorgiana Rosa, British Overseas NGO's for Development, pg. 343-347)
SIDA	There is a PGD (Policy for Global Development) in Sweden which is perceived as a good step, but there are question-marks on how to implement this policy for it to be truly effective. Critical comments are placed with the focus that there is on multilateralism and IFI support and the use of the PRSP to promote development, while this does not necessarily promote recipient-led development. (Thorsell, Syd and Weber, Peace Institute, pg. 333-336)
AusAID	AusAID is positively increasing its levels of aid and further untying its aid. However there is no clear time-table to reach the 0,7% OECD goal of aid. Related to this is the fact that there seems to be an increased focus on trade as opposed to aid and aid is more related to issues of governance and not other sectors such as rural development. The focus on governance is also due to security issues in the region of the pacific. This leads to an increased focus on foreign policy and security which is a downside to allowing recipient-led development. (Garth Luke, Australian Council for International Development, pg. 246-248)

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[27] *http://www.realityofaid.org/roareport.php?table=roa2006&id=1* 14th November

	USAID continually has to deal with the actuality there is not much space to work due to the fact that for increasing budgets etc. it has to get Congressional appropriations. There are a lot of promises but these are difficult to accomplish. A critical note remains that there is a big focus on the interests of the United States and issues of security. Promoting ownership of recipient countries is very difficult if not impossible to accomplish. (Jones and Nickenson, InterAction, pg. 350-354)
USAID	

Development partners' perception

Lastly a view is provided by the development partners within the recipient countries themselves on how they perceive ownership being fostered in their respective countries. These reports were done in several countries on the initiative of DFID. It gives a perspective also on how the recipient governments perceive the donors. These reports are not concentrated on the five donors which are central in this research, but give a view on the donors that are operating in those countries. However several of the five studied donors do certainly operate in these countries. An overview is provided of the issues that came up in the report with respect to ownership.

Country	Perception reports of donors
Indonesia	Several issues that come forward in the report: ▪ Ownership as such is not yet being achieved. (pg. 11) ▪ A legal and regulatory framework is being created, but it requires refinement. There is still a gap between the framework and day-to-day practice as well as a difference between the sectors. Additionally there seems to be a lack of coordination both within the government itself as well as with the different donors. (pg. 12) ▪ The perception is that there is a limited overall vision with regards to what aid effectiveness means, since more and more discussions are held about the technical aspects of reaching targets. (pg. 18) ▪ The link with MDGs is not very apparent. (pg. 19) (Source: Walsh, 2005, Perception of development partners and evidence on aid effectiveness in Indonesia)

Cambodia	Several issues that come forward in the report: • There is apparently not much consensus among donors of what ownership means. This is reflected in the variety in integrity of national ownership among agencies; the fact that the government can manipulate its position and donors pushing the aid coordination agenda. Besides, there is a philosophical disparity among donors on ownership: allowing the government to set the agenda and act on it, or only to let them decide on policies based on donor thoughts. (pg. 15) • Dissimilarities among donors exist with relation to meaning, motive, experiences etc. and interpretations. Once those are in place it is difficult to find each other. Added to this is the high level of aid dependency the country has which leads to an 'accommodating' government. Within the country the government sees ownership as an instrument of control over other stakeholders. (pg. 16) • Within the government there is also a high level of competition between ministries due to diverging interests which is detrimental to ownership. (pg. 17) (Source: Blunt and Samneang, 2005, Aid effectiveness and Aid coordination in Cambodia: Stakeholder perceptions)
Sri Lanka	Several issues that come forward in the report: • The framework put forward by the government is not really followed by donors, as they are more inclined to the using the 'old' framework which they prefer. So alignment of donors is done in relation to how much they were part of the process of setting up the framework. In most cases the donors believe that the government wants them to be in charge and take the lead. On the other hand the donors do feel that the government has some ownership, but not necessarily of what the donors want. (pg. 9) • The situation in Sri Lanka is a bit more complicated due to the presence of a "non-state actor with territorial control". (pg. 9) • Within the government there is a feeling that donors want them to do small quick projects, because they lead to quick and tangible results. The bigger contributors of money want to "keep" more ownership to themselves as opposed to being in a co-financing relation where the partner has some decision-making power as well. (pg. 11) (Source: Harris, 2005, Sri Lanka: Aid effectiveness *A scoping of development partners perceptions for DFID-SEA*)

Source DFID perception reports, 2005

Clearly depicted in these reports is that ownership remains a very elusive concept with different interpretations and levels of importance. Donors are struggling with ways in which to foster ownership, knowing that theory currently says it should lead to aid effectiveness, but not wanting to lose control of development. Definitely ownership when applied is seen as a means to reach aid effectiveness and not so much an end of letting people really decide their own future.

Apparently the external sources are somewhat harmonized in their view of the donors, in that there is much progress to be made when it comes to ownership in bilateral aid.

This seems to match the analysis of donor practice. In the following paragraph some initial conclusions are offered with regards to practice as in comparison to the good intentions that the donors started out with.

5.3 Intentions and reality harmonized?

The evaluation reports and external sources have provided a useful initial insight into the practice of donors. There is a clear range and distinction between the donors when it comes to practice of ownership. This is also evident in the existence of evaluations on ownership. SIDA allows a more in-depth look in the kitchen of their programs while the other donors remain more general and don't evaluate ownership so explicitly. This does potentially describe the importance of the good intentions as they appear in the conceptualization of ownership in the policies and strategies, being that they remain at the level of intentions and are not harmonized with practice.

The harmonization between intentions and reality is slightly debatable. European donors do show an increased sense of trying to deal with ownership and the related issues. But all donors seemingly quick find themselves in circumstances where underlying aspects of results, politics, economics, MDGs and aid effectiveness drive them away from situating themselves in the bilateral relation and fostering the good intention of country ownership (as mentioned in their policies) in a way that is implied in theory. Ownership is then a means to reach aid effectiveness, therefore quickly translated to 'owning' what is provided by the donors.

This might also explain the fact that while all donors talked about country ownership, in reality there is only a vague sense of government ownership in some contexts; with an occasional sidestep of a donor promoting increased stakeholder participation. Promoting country ownership in the genuine sense implied in theory would mean that the donor loses even more grip and sight of the results. This would require a change in the attitude towards and visions on development co-operation, which will be discussed in the last chapter.

So harmonization of intentions and reality has some way to go if based on the initial review of donor practice. Caution is necessary not to immediately jump to conclusions and blame donors for their practice. Firstly, ownership as a concept has been receiving increased attention the last two years, while several of the evaluations were done before this, leaving space for improved change. Secondly, further research is needed to complement these initial findings after the donors have received time to work on ownership.

6. Through the maze of rhetoric towards change

"Development is not about words and procedures. It is about changing the reality of people's lives. We need procedures, concepts and methods, but only as tools to help us do the work that needs to be done". (Everjoice Win, 2004: 127)

Not being caught in the trap of rhetoric, means stepping away from a mere use of fashion-statements upholding the development industry and looking at what matters; the lives of people. Immediate caution is needed not to take this to mean changing what matters according to the envisioning of donors, but if talking about ownership, simply fostering a reality as proposed by these people. The question to be answered is then, should ownership be mentioned in bilateral relations, due to the nature of aid relations and the challenges and implications involved? Or does ownership require a change in behavior; a review of development co-operation? Before looking into this, a brief re-cap is presented.

6.1 Overview of things seen and learned

Comprehending the concept of ownership quickly proves to be more complex than initially expected. Realization dawns that understanding the aspects involved means unraveling and soon adding concepts of power, participation and capacity development that prove to be the corner stones of this concept. Donors presumably do not recognize this, judging the high degree of enthusiasm with which a concept such as ownership is introduced into policies and strategies. This non-recognition shows in the practice of fostering good intentions of ownership, which proves to be limited and in some occasions even questionable. Although seemingly putting donors in a negative light, it is almost inevitable that this route to ownership was taken due to the way in which it came to play a role in development co-operation; namely to increase the effectiveness of aid to reduce poverty.

Is ownership as a means then inherently bad, simply a concept to be avoided in bilateral aid? Or can there in some way be a shift away from rhetoric to changes in behavior?

6.2 Rhetoric or catalyst for behavioral change?

This research has made an initial step towards uncovering the way ownership is conceptualized and practiced in bilateral aid relations. Clear is that currently ownership is more rhetoric than that it significantly adds meaning to ways of enriching development co-operation. The rhetoric is especially related to the notion of country ownership. Partly this has to do with the shear complexity and enormity of bringing together interests of all stakeholders and even citizens, in a country that in no circumstance can be viewed as homogenous; this is a daunting if not impossible task. Certainly rhetoric also takes place with government ownership. Partly this has to do with complex interests, but also with the increased focus on results and need for more effective aid; in turn meaning that ownership in bilateral relations is more or less a nice word conveying that donors want to allow governments to control their 'own' issues, as long as those issues are what donors would want them to own and control. Tied to this are the implications and challenges that power, participation and capacity development bring along, calling for a certain sobering of intentions.

What then should be done with the concept of ownership? Certainly throwing it overboard and going back to the days of supply-driven, conditionality-loaded and selective aid is not the answer. On the other hand rhetoric in development co-operation is not very useful and could even be argued to be unethical. Enforcing visions, beliefs, ideas, sectors, programs and projects under the flag of ownership is not exactly very decent. Preaching ownership and not practicing it, is creating artificial intentions. Knowing that rhetoric is largely pushed by a results-oriented attitude and the very nature of aid, where does ownership stand?

Ownership as a means, since that is what it implies in bilateral relations requires a careful approach. Care needs to be taken in over-enthusiastically and hastily mentioning country ownership as the 'carrier' of aid in bilateral relations, yet not understanding fully what that means. Care needs to be taken in mentioning government ownership without discerning power differentials and inequalities. Care needs to be taken not to

use words and modes of delivering aid that are simply hollow practice; ways to disguise true intentions. Taking care is an opening step in ownership becoming that much-needed catalyst for behavioral change.

Engaging in the struggles, the challenges, the implications and understanding of ownership can assist in that change. Donors must come to grips with the fact that ownership is fundamentally, in current practice, a means to delivering more effective aid. Taking this as a starting point they can critically engage and reflect on ownership within development co-operation. Realizing the nature of aid, the dilemma of giving and wanting results and the presence of power are crucial to changing behavior. Donors must step away from an uncritical use of words, attempting to make new fashion-statements with old clothes; also known as rhetoric.

This engagement and reflection can bring donors on the road of behavioral change. A road not littered with words and concepts implying a North-South divide. Rather, a road that envisions centralizing people, whether poor or marginalized, equal in rights to the constituents of the donors. A road that enables, empowers and equips people to decide their paths of development; fostering their hopes and dreams for the future.

Presumably progressive donors are starting to walk this route, yet much is left to be done. The dilemma of aid remains, whether liked or not, but the dilemma can manifest itself less harshly leaving more room for ownership. This calls for donors to engage with their own constituents, supposedly the people who require the results, reflecting on ways to decrease the divide and increase the realization of the interdependency of North and South. Changing from within, moving away from a sole focus on results to a focus on people, will allow that increased space that is needed to foster ownership.

Can ownership exist in bilateral agreements? Yes it can, but it needs critical reflection and engagement toning down intentions and expectations, careful attention and a change towards centralizing people.

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Annexes

Annex A

	Areas of ownership	Indicators/Proxy's	
		Government Ownership	*Country ownership*
Dimensions	*Ideas/ strategies*	Government initiative	Stakeholder initiative
		Demonstrated political will to be involved	Commitment of stakeholders
	Processes	Government initiative	Stakeholder initiative
		Government controls implementation	Stakeholders control implementation
		Government controls monitoring	Stakeholders control monitoring
	Resources	Shift towards more untied aid	Shift towards more untied aid
		Shift towards SWAP/GBS	Shift towards SWAP/GBS
		Contribution of government (financial, human etc.)	Contribution of stakeholders (financial, human etc.)
	Outcomes	Attribution of program to government	Attribution of program to stakeholders
		Accountability of government	Accountability of stakeholders
Challenges	*Power*	Existence of conditionality	Existence of conditionality
		Subordination to government priorities and plans	Subordination to stakeholder priorities and plans
		Transparency and openness	Transparency and openness
		Use of PRSP	Use of PRSP
	Capacity	Developing individual capacity	Developing individual capacity
		Developing organizational capacity	Developing organizational capacity
		Developing institutional capacity	Developing institutional capacity
		Donor capacity to foster ownership	Donor capacity to foster ownership
	Participation	Involvement of government during various stages	Involvement of stakeholders during various stages
		Level on ladder of participation	Level on ladder of participation

Annex 2

Donor (Year that peer review was done)	DAC Peer Reviews (OECD)...
Netherlands (2006)	- Positive focus on quality of aid and aid effectiveness - Thematic spending which is good for MDGs, but debatable for ownership and could lead to a supply-driven approach - Strong focus on results - Strategic plans that are made are mostly for internal use and don't involve recipient countries very much - Leadership role in promoting SWAP and budget support, however the GBS could be more effective if there is more clarity in the conditionality approach - Focus on political governance - Paris Declaration requires a more central role in Dutch development
DFID (2006)	- Considerable scope exists to work on more effectiveness - The weight that DFID carries allows for an increased promotion of a common approach amongst donors - The longer term funding has led to a better aid predictability - Care needs to be taken with imposing earmarks which would undermine ownership - Theoretically DFID is very advanced, yet this doesn't always relate to practice or the situation on 'the field' - DFID is considered to be a champion in working with GBS - There is a large focus on the so-called higher end of development (government) and not so much the citizens
SIDA (2005)	- The integrated view on development through the Policy for Global Development (PGD) is seen as innovative and ambitious, though there is caution due to difficulty in implementation - Considered to be a committed partner - Considered to be a leader in development issues - SIDA has a long-lasting relation with development which also leads to a high degree of public support (Swedish citizens) giving more room to work - The need is identified to increasingly decentralize operational decision-making to embassies so as to foster ownership
AusAID (2004)	- Importance is placed on aligning national interests and partner interests - AusAID uses thematic and sectoral policies and implementation approaches - Attempts are made to "mainstream" development across the entire government, though this has risks - Care is needed to deal with increased security interests in relation with development - There is an increased decentralization of management to partner countries - AusAID actively supports partnership principles such as alignment - Attention is needed to deal with low capacity, weak institutions and corruption in partner countries - AusAID makes a lot of use of external technical assistance
USAID (2002)	- Congress in charge of budget which has major implications for development - Foreign aid is mostly defined in terms of foreign policy and national interests - Largest portion of tied aid among donors - There is a large of 'local presence' of USAID - USAID has difficulty working together with other donors - A high portion of aid is earmarked