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An anthropological reading of the policies of international development: export competitiveness as a conjunctural case study

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Abstract Drawing on ethnography of the World Bank's private sector development program, this paper explores the ways in which discussions of export competitiveness emerged in the past decade or so and how they interacted with larger discourses on solidarity and development. The immediate context within which this idea emerged was that of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) which had maintained that the public regulation of the private economy compromises on industrial productivity (and by extension distributive social justice). But it would be naïve to think that alternative ideologies have not tried to insert themselves within the Bank's neoliberal discourse on development. If anything, discursive narratives suggest that the very notion of export competitiveness initially worked to justify the role of the state in regulating and incubating the private sector in developing countries even if these attempts became disembedded from their local contexts in the long run. This paper contextualizes this specific encounter on export competitiveness within the broader discourse of development and economic anthropology to examine the discursive politics of policy and knowledge in the global aid industry.

Keywords Competitiveness · Economic liberalization · Development · Embeddedness · Structural adjustment program (SAP) · Polanyi · Human economy · The World Bank · IFIs

The neoliberal wave of the 1990s considered that market deregulation and currency convertibility alone will trigger industrialization and that state interference in private sector activities will be materially counterproductive. Within international development, the neoliberal rhetoric was embraced by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to justify their own roles in helping their "client countries" around the world to grow and prosper. Approximately half a century after Rostow (1960) published his "non-communist manifesto" of economic

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development, and 4 decades after the Washington Consensus endorsed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) consisting of a set of economic liberalization measures that the IFIs imposed on their client governments,[1] I consider it timely to explore grounds for the post-SAP programs evolving in these organizations. I clarify here that a series of economic crises around the globe[2] have allowed for a new occasion to reflect on the neoliberal tenets of development, although—as Phil Mirowski (2013) has argued—neoliberalism has returned with a vengeance to rule at least some parts of the developing world. I revisit this dialectic and do so by applying a microscopic lens on the less visited topic of the organizational restructuring within the IFIs especially in the World Bank concerning its industrial development agenda during and after the era of structural adjustment.

The empirical grounding of this paper lies in its inquiry of the practice agenda behind the policy debate involving the Bank's economic liberalization. What are the implications of this debate for the World Bank especially as it undergoes an organizational overhaul under the new leadership? I examine the organizational restructuring carried out during the tenure of two of the Bank Presidents, namely, Robert Zoellick and Jim Yong Kim who immediately followed the tenure of James Wolfenson, a former investment banker and a two-term President of the World Bank who led this organization through its SAP era. The site of my fieldwork is a cluster of the Bank's units specializing on industry and trade whose multiple shifts in programs, policies, and staffing I review here. My initial questions concern the extent to which the Bank is being shaped by the discourse and practice that has come to challenge the Washington Consensus which gave rise to the hegemonic platform of SAP. Has there been a shift recently on the SAP era wisdom as to whether the Bank should be a global referee, that is, a passive watchdog of policy movements towards industrial deregulation and economic liberalization? Or should it be an active practitioner working with the governments in its client countries to build industries and incubating them towards a Rostowian takeoff? I specifically look into the ideological contestations and organizational politics within the Bank to assess the real and potential changes in its neoliberal premise. Are the discursive categories and frames of reference solipsized, or in other words, self-generated by the earlier position(s) the Bank had taken on the role of the state in generating economic development? I situate this particular debate on export competitiveness within the broader discourse on formalism vs substantivism within economic anthropology in critiquing the solipsistic way in which buzz-words are plucked and reinterpreted to suit the interests of the aid organizations.

What exactly are the policy measures advised by the Bank to its client governments for stirring growth, and what are the ones that it forbids? It is only a thin line that separates what gets promoted in the name of building "public goods" necessary to nurture industries in a developing country from the ones condemned as having "market-distorting" effects and hence undermining productivity. The boundary is increasingly blurred as the Bank is swept by new waves of ideational change and organizational restructuring. I situate this particular internal Bank debate within the broader claim that ideational conservatism and scholarly amnesia have limited the knowledge agenda of the aid organizations (Stein 2008; Goldman 2001; Green 2009). I question whether an organization like the World Bank can ever go beyond the market-led notion of growth as development, and comprehend the nuances of critical concepts such as "embeddedness" beyond its formalist (mis)understanding for it to mean individual entities' harnessing of (supposedly exploitable) social capital for earning

[1] See Williamson (1990) for a list of policy conditionalities imposed on the borrowing governments binding them to open up their economies for foreign investment and international trade.

[2] The economic crises in question include, among others, the Asian financial crisis of 1998, the Anglo-American crisis of 2008, and the Greek crisis about its membership of the European Union in 2015.

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profit. What I aim to achieve in this paper is, borrowing Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000) expression about the lingering residues of colonial tension of power and hegemony, to "provincialize" the emphasis on profit-motive market in development discourse and to make space for other understandings of development that have been censored out by its rational choice ethos. In doing so, I take "competitiveness" as one of the several solipsized terms dominating the practice agenda on international development and industrial excellence, and which needs to be deconstructed to allow space for a meaningful engagement towards a shared desire for a more humanized harnessing of money, machine and labour on the shop floors.

Chasing "competitiveness": an ethnography of a concept

During a brief personal visit to the USA, I was invited to a graduation party at the World Bank in Washington DC in December 2012. A "graduation" party? In the World Bank? A graduation in what? My friends told me, this was to celebrate the successful completion of its competitiveness stream of programs. But what did "completion" mean, when it was clear that there were a large number of of ongoing projects lending money and selling policy advice to its client countries on this stream? But also what did it mean in terms of the staff it still employed under this particular reporting scheme and the office spaces that still physically signposted to the offices of the departments of competitiveness? I accepted the invitation in the spirit of inquiry. The venue where this office party was held was in the "F" building that housed IFC, the private sector wing of the World Bank Group. On arrival, we were all given colorful hats to don and promotional mugs to take home. Also duly came a rolled sheet of A4 size paper resembling university certificate with the following text typed in: "You have successfully graduated from the competitiveness programme with the World Bank". Drinks and snacks were served. And then came a speech from one of the senior managers who announced that the Bank had now "graduated" from the "old" idea of competitiveness to a "new" one. So, it turned out that the Bank was not ditching the idea on competitiveness per se, but it was being refitted into the ongoing organizational restructuring as a new product.

Further investigations suggested that the supposed shift from the old to the new competitiveness was a bureaucratic exercise timed in to suit the promises being made by a (relatively) new President Jim Yong Kim[3] who rolled out a sweeping organizational change within the Bank. Under a new organizational structure he had set up, the Bank ditched the so-called "matrix system" which had been in place since 1998 and which had assigned a twin reporting system for every Bank employee to work under. For example, an employee could be either assigned to one of the seven "regional" units[4] or they could be assigned to one of the five "thematic" (or anchor) units.[5] While the regional units followed the geographic grouping of

[3] Jim Y. Kim was nominated by the Obama administration into the position of the President of the World Bank in July 2012 upon completion of the term of the outgoing President Robert Zoellick. While Zoellick was a former US trade representative who had fiercely negotiated the terms of trade for American industries in China, Kim is a former medical anthropologist and a liberal academic earlier known for his criticism of excessive emphasis on economic growth for broader development (Kim et al. 2002).

[4] The seven geographic regions under which the Bank programs were divided in were, namely, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central America, and sub-Saharan Africa.

[5] The five thematic units under which the Bank programs were organized under could be listed as Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM), Public Sector Reform and Governance, Finance and Private Sector Development (FPD), Sustainable, Rural and Infrastructure Development (SD), Human Development (HD), and Development Economics (DEC).

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countries and continents, the thematic units covered a wide set of developmental issues ranging across the industrial, human, social, and environmental. The regional and thematic streams crisscrossed along what is often referred to as "cross-support" such that any "mission" to a potential client country that were being planned for developing some business in that country would consist of a team that combined regional expertise with thematic. Recently, the new organizational restructuring replaced the Matrix system with a Practice system.

Accordingly, staff reporting structures were revised such that each person would now be assigned to one of the 14 "global practices" newly identified as the focus areas under which the Bank Group would function.[6] Under the new Global Practices system, "trade and competitiveness" came to be constructed as one such organizational unit with designated allocation of the Bank resources and a formal reporting structure. The "graduation ceremony" that I talked about earlier in this paper clearly marked the shift from competitiveness as a subdomain within international trade under the Matrix system to a core business line item under the new Global Practice system. Earlier, competitiveness was managed within a thematic unit: PREM, whereas now it was being managed as a self-standing business unit under the new Practice system. The speech delivered by the manager at the "graduation party" and the toast raised by the crowd of the Bank employees was in essence a theatrical ritual in the Geertzian sense enacted to ensure that the new bureaucratic order ran smoothly without hiccups.

The cheers and buzz that followed the "graduation" toast took me back to year 2006 when I had joined the World Bank under its Young Professional Programme (YPP) to work for the International Trade department which was working to launch a new component on "export competitiveness." This was a nascent idea at the time within the Bank, and a modest team of two staff had been recruited to do so. The concern of this new initiative on export competitiveness was that potential entrepreneurs were finding it hard to launch and sustain business ventures in developing countries because the business environment was skewed and the necessary institutional and physical infrastructure were missing. I was part of this nascent competitiveness team for about 6 years, although I had already served a year in another department which also worked to build competitiveness among the firms in developing countries, but without explicitly using the term competitiveness.

Upon formally joining the export competitiveness team within the PREM unit of the World Bank, the initial task on our plate, of developing a "working concept" for competitiveness, was more of a pragmatic exercise of building a deliberative platform and an alliance among the diverse fields of expertise, even if we began by inviting globally renowned scholars to present their ideas under an open seminar series launched in 2007. Michael Porter (1990) from the Harvard Business School made his case that governments should build industrial clusters to enhance competitiveness of their businesses, but we also gave platform to macroeconomists echoing Paul Krugman's (1994) skepticism about competitiveness being "a dangerous game" and hence cautioning governments against associating too closely with their businessmen. At times, we were perceived to be sympathetic to Dani Rodrik's (2004) emphasis that governments should directly tackle the "binding constraints" undermining the operations of key industries. We also invited Charles Sabel

[6] The 14 units listed under its Global Practices are agriculture, education, energy and extractives, environment and natural resources, finance and markets, governance, health and nutrition and population, macroeconomics and fiscal management, poverty, social protection and labor, social/urban/rural and resilience, trade and competitiveness, water, and transport and information/communication technologies.

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(2001), an economic sociologist who was calling for a “bootstrapping policy” whereby the government would provide incremental subsidies for industries with a proven track record.

The International Trade department where this nascent competitiveness team was housed had come into being by forging an alliance between two unlikely bedfellows: The Development Economists Group (DEC) side of the Trade team worked to produce empirical research that grounded two core agendas of free trade, i.e., first, the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers for integrating domestic market with global, and second, the opening up of capital accounts by allowing hard and soft capital to move across borders. It is worth remembering that the DEC’s mandate was to ensure that the Bank remained at the cutting edge of knowledge and research on the topics related to economic liberalization. DEC was essentially seen in the Bank as the equivalent of an economics department of a university and was manned by postdoctoral researchers of varying caliber to run its research program. The PREM side of the Trade team on the other hand constituted of practicing macroeconomists who teamed up with the regional staff to advise client governments on policy reforms within the framework of the structural adjustment program. Anchored in this alliance, the Trade department maintained that free trade was a necessary condition for market-led growth. At this initial stage, this department did not concern itself much with industry-specific bottlenecks.

Several years after its formation, however, the Trade department built a distinct component on the logistics of trade. Conceptually, this component was justified through the argument that trade cannot logistically flow without sufficient infrastructure for transportation. Programmatically, this component was incorporated into the Bank operations through a benchmarking indicator called Logistics Performance Index (LPI) which ranked countries on (1) the overall state of transport infrastructure, (2) government’s ability to arrange competitively priced transport services, (3) availability of modern technology to track and trace cargo while ensuring its safety and the reliability of the delivery schedule, and (4) efficiency of customs clearance (World Bank 2016). Once LPI came to be accepted as a standard “business product” within the Bank, the International Trade department could be invited by its regional counterparts to provide “cross-support” for designing technical assistance (TA) that would improve trade connectivity in its client countries.

Returning to our discussion on export competitiveness, the premise within which this new team was added within the International Trade department was that the LPI argument about the public sector role in improving the extent and quality of trade through better connectivity could logically be extended to justify state support for addressing sector-specific bottlenecks in key export industries. Building on the prior experience within the department, the first task that the export competitiveness team took up was to come up with a conceptual framework, not an academic or theoretical one, but a “working document” that may strategically identify potential contributors and supporters as well as the counterparts within the developing countries which could be its future clients. This team needed to acknowledge the sensitivity among the Bank macroeconomists about allowing governments to proactively support private sector industries. The premise of the Bank’s structural adjustment framework had been after all that governments should not provide support to any specific industry (or industries) but should instead concern itself with broader regulatory issues that span across all industrial sectors, e.g., reducing fiscal deficits and removing barriers on competition. It had been argued that industry-specific and firm-specific policies and incentive programs deserved to be shelved for a “genuine” industrialization to take roots. The reality at the time was that the word ‘industrial policy’ itself had become a derogatory labeling within the Bank. When a prominent economist Dani Rodrik wrote a paper “Industrial Policy of the Twenti-first Century,” several of the Bank economists called it

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blasphemous, and an ardent advocate of economic liberalization Jagadish Bhagawati went to great lengths to caution the Bank to steer away from this entrapment (see Bhagawati 2008).

Half a year or so into the job, the competitiveness team came up with a clarification that the framework on industrial competitiveness was aware of the dangers of "distorting the market." After all, the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s had prescribed an entrenched public policy position on deregulation of the market thus arguably allowing free capital movement so as to ensure that scarce resources move freely to the best industrial sectors, and within those sectors, to the best firms. It took some time for the newly launched program on competitiveness to find its feet in this heavily contested terrain. Over time, the team came to (re)define competitiveness as a new complementary add-on to the Bank's policy advisory on structural adjustment in the form of mesoeconomic and microeconomic restructuring towards deregulation. There was little clarity as to how competitiveness could be inserted within the Bank operations and it seems pragmatism prevailed over scholarly puritanism. After several presentations and deliberations, what eventually got approved by the Bank management as a competitiveness framework included a "three-pillar" strategy, its pillars being (1) reinforcement of "macroeconomic fundamentals" such as tariff and exchange rate policies, (2) reduction of "factor costs" spent on transport, logistics, and customs, and (3) measures to overcome "market failures" for export-oriented industries including provision of conditional financial support, specialized advisory on scientific and environmental concerns, building of global value chains and industrial clusters, and the incubation of innovative entrepreneurial ventures. It was acknowledged that the first two pillars had already been covered within the existing structure of the International Trade. The competitiveness team thus chose the third pillar as its specific area of focus.

Situating competitiveness within the Bank discourse on industrial development

It is fair to say that the idea of competitiveness originates from the grounds of business studies. A renowned business school professor, Michael Porter (1990), had proposed that the "competitive advantage" of nations lay in the degree of sophistication of its firm. He measured national competitiveness by evaluating its microeconomic business environment as well as the extent of successful coordination and alliance building among the business entities. Porter proposed "industrial clusters" as a policy option for governments to achieve competitiveness by pairing up spatial, social, and political coordination to improve the effectiveness of state policies and support for enhancing productivity at the firm level. It is this specific pairing up of elements having to do with individual profit-making and collective sociality with politics which I argue brought Porter's idea of competitiveness closer to the sociology of institutional studies. Academically speaking, this overlapping area has been studied under the subfield of industrial sociology that is built on the central premise that industrialization trajectories will vary across societies because every society has its own characteristic sets of rules and norms generating slightly differing sets of industrial ecosystems (Clegg et al. 2015; Clegg et al. 1990; Fukuyama 1995; Harriss et al. 1995). From this acknowledgement emerged a policy proposition that the programs of industrial development should build on the already existing industrial ecosystems rather than blindly relying on the abstract hypotheses about demand-supply equilibrium (Humphrey and Schmitz 1996; Rodriguez-Clare

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2005; Ketels 2013). This particular policy proposition on industrial clusters triggered two sets of response from the global economic thinkers: at one end, economists including those housed under the Bank and the IMF dismissed the advice that its client countries were to involve themselves with the "micro" issues of firm coordination let alone exposing themselves to the messiness of social and business networking or the complex politics of alliance building. At the heart of this debate lay the doctrine that this can give rise to "rent-seeking" or a phantom value whereby privileged entities with better access to the state powers would supposedly manipulate the distribution of public resources so that business competitiveness is compromised to promote self-seeking ventures launched by those who are politically connected and culturally dominant (Krueger 1974). At the other end, economic geographers and post-liberalization economists used the cluster theory to advocate for a renewal of the industrial policy discourse of the 1960s and 1970s when the states had taken proactive measures in building pioneering industrial infrastructures which also ensured social benefits and regional benefits (Fujita, Krugman, and Venables 2001; Zeng 2008; Rodriguez-Clare 2005; Collier and Page 2009; Narotzky, 2016).

It has to be noted that industrial clusters earned support from some unexpected quarters of social science, among those looking for ways to counter the neoliberal hegemony of free markets that had forced states to give up their regulative responsibilities. Cadene and Holmstrom (1998) used clusters as an anthropological tool to investigate the emergence of modern industrial districts in South India while arguing that the government must ensure that workers' aspirations for a better life are not thwarted in the new wave of capitalism that put profit enhancement to be the primary objective of development. Piore and Sabel (1984) had already laid the foundation for a proposition on "flexible specialization" as an alternative coordinative system of industries that could possibly question the Anglo-Saxon hegemony that made mass manufacturing system the only imaginal possibility about industrialization. Ironically, such a hegemony seems to have its roots in Keynesian economics which were more concerned with the social implications of industrialization, compared to, for example, the exclusive concerns on entrepreneurship (McCraw 2007). Several other researchers have used the industrial cluster approach to produce empirical research demonstrating that state regulation of industries helped achieve higher economic efficiency (Schmitz and Nadvi 1999; Sabel and Zeitlin 1997). They were later joined by disgruntled economists who had been arguing throughout the 2 decades of the economic liberalization paradigm that it had to be dismantled altogether since the global drive on structural adjustment programs had not and would not deliver much industrial success in most developing countries. Ha-Joon Chang (2002) argued, for example, that almost all developed countries had subsidized their own industrialization and that the IFI's policy conditionality of economic liberalization amounting to state withdrawal from industrialization reeked of hypocrisy or even conspiracy.

Perhaps most notable among the proponents of the industrial policy argument who confronted the IFIs directly is a Harvard economist Dani Rodrik, who was invited by the Bank to advise its Growth Commission in 2008 that undertook an "independent" assessment of the SAPs. While engaging in this task, Rodrik built on Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz's earlier thesis that market supremacy theory glossed over the blind alleys of market failures often attributable to the problems of information asymmetry where the market alone would not trigger firm responses until sound and robust public information systems are put in place (World Bank 2008). A quantitative model built by Rodrik's team was later expanded in scope

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and developed into an interactive database under the rubric of "overcoming binding constraints" for use by the Bank economists and was regularly used to make the case for a stronger public role especially in achieving export diversification and technology upgrades in developing countries. The Rodrik camp's enthusiasm for this new device and discourse fizzled, however, as the Bank management brushed aside the idea of binding constraints when it launched its Growth Commission report in 2008. The Commission was a high-profile body constituted to review the Bank's growth-related work and to seek recommendation and feedback from the global leaders of policy, government, and business.[7] At the launch of the Growth Commission work in July 2008, Dani Rodrik was invited to speak where the PREM Vice President of the Bank stated that no major restructuring was necessary in the Bank's incumbent growth strategy since the high-profile Commission was re-endorsing it already.

This anecdote about the Growth Commission aside, the discourse on industrial policy needs to be contextualized within the longer span of history of international development. I am reminded here of two specific points: the first is that both socialist and liberal governments had been originally implicated for "proactive" policy and action towards achieving economic growth and advancement through better managing of industries and the second is that the launch of "international development" cannot be isolated from its postcolonial roots in that the commitment for "development" originally came as a joint project between the former colonizers and the colonized to ensure global social justice (Sundaram 2016). I state these two seemingly unrelated statements to make my case that the currently dominant premise of SAPs which takes market deregulation as an almost ideological pursuit isolated from its broader context of development is not a continuation but a disjuncture from the earlier tradition of development.

On my first point, we should remind ourselves that developmental propositions of the 1930s and 1940s were predominantly Keynesian in outlook, whereby the states would make an initial "big push" to trigger an entrepreneurial chain of actions (Rosenstein-Rodan 1943) either by incubating a set of key industrial sectors or by building spatial "growth poles" (Perroux 1950). In this teleological schema, industrial development could be either "balanced" (Nurkse 1953), i.e., holding multiple industrial sectors at par with one another or "unbalanced", i.e., by disrupting the sectoral equation so that one growing sector puts pressure on the other, thereby stirring a sustained (if chaotic) chain of industrial activities (Rostow 1960; Gershenkron 1962). A stocktaking of the 1980s growth premises shows varied industrial trajectories across regions: an early industrializer Japan demonstrated for example that states can selectively harness industries that show better export potentials (Komiya, Okuno, and Suzumura 1988). Late Asian industrializers including Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong also entailed state support but by anticipating market failures and by developing preemptive strategies to counter those failures (Lindauer *et al.* 1991; Pack 1992).

On my second point on international development being about a collective pursuit of global social justice where industrialization was a means and not an end, I flag a recent volume by Hann and Hart (2011), which reminds us that it was rich countries' commitment to help the new (postcolonial) states which brought us a common usage of the term development. More recent reflections on the Bandung Afro-Asian solidarity conference of 1955 show that the framework of development was as much embraced by the leaders of the new states as by the

[7] The Growth Commission consisted, among others, of the former Prime Minister of Korea, the former and sitting Finance Ministers from India, Turkey, Nigeria and South Africa, and two Nobel Laureate economists Robert Solow and Michael Spence. The Commission worked for two years.

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former colonizers who saw this as the beginning of a new relation with their former colonies (Chakrabarty 2010; Sundaram 2016; Nigam 2016). Over the course of decades, however, the first world commitment for third world development faded, triggering a fundamental transformation of meanings and motives. If the rapid growth of the world economy in the 1950s and 1960s had encouraged a brief hope about a teleology of development, the oil crisis and stagflation[8] of the 1970s thwarted it and turned it into a rigid labeling so much so that the third world lost its hope about joining the status of the first world in the near future.[9] In the 1980s, as the Anglo-Saxon world recovered from economic depression thus hailing what Mcwandawire (2001) called "neoclassical counter-revolution" and the ascendancy of monetarism, even more pronounced alterations emerged in understandings about the role of the developed nations in pursuing development in the postcolonial geography. On the one hand, the first world's concerns about the inadequacy of the servicing of their debt by the third world pre-empted several calls for increased foreign aid. On the other hand, the third world - earlier allowed to emulate Anglo-Saxon Keynesianism of the 1970s - now came under pressure to withdraw proactive industrial functions and cut down on programs offering social benefits to focus on fiscal tightening that would facilitate higher debt servicing (Toye 1987; Harvey 2007; Krugman 1992). All these mark an end of the collaboration between the first world and the third world, so much so that even the mainstream developmentalists came to relate to Arturo Escobar's (1995) claim that development aspirations were in reality an illusion working to reinforce racist global hierarchies.

The anthropology of World Bank's development

This section situates my ethnography of the World Bank export competitiveness program within the broader discourse on international development which is necessarily eclectic and multi-layered. In doing so, I join the conversation on the Bank's role as the knowledge bank on the one hand (Stein 2008) and a cosmopolitan community on the other (Ribeiro 2012). My aim is not to leave ethnography as a minefield of information and perspectives but to extract its anthropological relevance. I take anthropology to mean the Kantian universal humanism concerned about finding orders of morality that would allow us to build new and more inclusive human associations (Hart 2015). In this, I am guided by the overall premise that (industrial) development loses its meaning if considered in isolation from the broader human aspirations and the trajectories of action. My argument is that studying and seeing industries in isolation of their social and human contexts trigger a formalist mode of reasoning which reduces all values simply to a count of their profit utilities. The critique of the "anti-politics" of development, which is a field already established within anthropology, necessitates a critique of the desocialized account of development we read in the narratives produced by the aid agencies and the scholarship that they sponsor. One useful starting point in terms of applying this universal humanist lens into the subfield of industrial development would be to question the ideology that considers the vague and piecemeal concept of "industrial productivity" to be societies' and nations' *raison d'etre*. I propose that this requires deconstructing of the monolithic notion

[8] "Stagflation" denotes a slow economic growth scenario complicated by an unusual combination of high inflation and high unemployment, thus posing the policy dilemma as to whether to curb one or the other since addressing one problem would force deterioration of the other.

[9] See Ferguson (2005) for a discussion on how developmental aspirations and assurances—that third world countries can achieve the prosperity enjoyed by the first world if they made efforts—have now been lost thus turning the ranking of development from a "telos" to a "status."

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entertained by the Bank practitioners that the social contexts of business organization are to be understood strictly in terms of the "tangible benefits" they bring to business productivity. I clarify my position through a discussion of two such cases that unfolded earlier where we saw ideological formalism sabotage the anthropological concerns for development. The two cases I discuss here are about the Bank projects on "social capital" and on "culture." Discussing these two projects on socio-economic embeddedness are relevant especially because those engaged in the competitiveness project which is being analyzed here, including those who advocated for frameworks such as "cluster-based competitiveness," "bootstrapping," and "binding constraint diagnostics" that challenged the mainstream macroeconomic models, all found themselves restricted to a narrow, formalist scope carved out by solipsizing the meaning of society-economy overlap.

Although the Bank did not invent the term social capital, a political scientist Robert Putnam had popularized its use within the Bank by tapping on to the nostalgia of a "loss of community."[10] His argument was that trusts and networks can make a society more efficient towards problem-solving by facilitating a cooperative spirit that can trigger economic and developmental success even in the face of adversarial rule (Putnam 1993; Putnam 2000). This offered economists a new and ready-to-use explanatory variable that expanded the scope of their work into matters otherwise classified under social, cultural, and political studies. The World Bank even launched an ambitious Social Capital Initiative (SCI) and brought on board Nobel Prize Laureate economists Kenneth Arrow and Robert Solow to advise how this "tool" can be used within the Bank's framework on development (Dasgupta and Serageldin 1999). Ironically, however, this venture came under attack both from economists and anthropologists, and the Bank sought a quick exit on this topic (Fine 2000). John Harriss (2002) wrote a book severely criticizing that Bank-favored economist Putnam's oversimplified definition of social capital conveniently singled out "horizontal, voluntary associations" such as neighborhood clubs and choirs from the "dark side" of social capital such as mafia, political unions, and communal organizations.[11] Such an interpretation of social capital then conveniently justified why the Bank and other aid agencies may engage with the soft actors in societies while turning a blind eye on the "dark side" needing intervention or acknowledgement. Obviously, the central problem of the social reproduction of class, which Bourdieu's original work on social and cultural capital had been concerned with, was neatly plucked and discharged as the discourse got reinvented for the Bank. If anything, several of the Bank practitioners seemed genuinely unaware of Bourdieu's highlighting that social differentiation of class was rooted in varying access to durable social relationships, while others considered such matters of social reproduction irrelevant for their work on industrial development (Bano 2012). Bebbington et al.'s (2004) review of the discourse on social capital concluded that external readings of these debates have overstated their operational relevance for the Bank, but without adequately acknowledging the political significance of the changes in the actual programmatic.

Let me now briefly turn to another of the Bank's engagement with the society-economy overlap which also seems to have triggered solipsism of its own. A flagship Bank publication "Culture and Public Action" edited by Rao and Walton (2004) started out as a well-meaning effort

[10] Robert Putnam's (1993) book *Making Democracy Work* was an immediate bestseller and formed pair with another bestseller by Francis Fukuyama (1995), on *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity.* President Bill Clinton even used the term "social capital" in a State of the Union address.

[11] Harriss's (2002) argument that Putnam's "depoliticized" narrative which puts neighborhood mingling at the heart of all problem-solving while ignoring more complex elements should be read with Ferguson's scathing criticism that aid agencies' disregard for local politics in developing countries comes from a misplaced belief that their own interventions are free from the broader rules of the game.

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to bring on board the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen to figure out ways in which the Bank programs may develop an awareness of cultural particularities of the policies and practices it imposes on its client countries. Despite being led by such high-profile scholars, the book's impact on the Bank's discourse and operations was peripheral. Several years later, an informal inquiry was conducted to understand why this publication left so little imprint on the Bank, and the report brought out the fact that eminent anthropological figures as Arjun Appadurai and Mary Douglas who had contributed to the Culture book were considered "relatively unheard [of] scholars" by most intellectuals within the Bank. There almost seems to be a pattern here that the Bank's knowledge about emerging global scholarship, not only on anthropological concepts such as culture but also within the domain of economics, was piecemeal and biased. For example, when Douglass North was awarded the Nobel Prize for figuring out a way of understanding the institutional "mental models" into the way economies worked, the Bank learned that its editors of the journal *World Bank Economic Observer*—which is run by the prominent scholars within the Bank—had turned down a submission from North considering it to be "not really economic."[12] Such omissions of knowledge and perspectives signal a bigger problem for an organization that calls itself a knowledge bank. An ethnography of organizational subculture along the lines of what van Mannen (2007) and Crozier (2010) argued seems necessary to understand how and why certain discourses and their interpretations emerge (or not) within the Bank and the IFIs so as to understand a pattern as to how discourses translate into practice or in some cases do not.

The politics of "embeddedness"

Recent years have seen some stirring of efforts that deconstruct the modes of discursive power on market superiority over society. If the organizational politics surrounding the recent debates on culture and social capital within the World Bank shed some light on the challenges of translating discourse into practice, a broader review of earlier such discourses point to more facets of the real-world implications of the politics of discourse. Almost 3 decades after Granovetter (1984) wrote his vastly cited essay that dichotomized the discourse on society-economy overlap into a binary of "under-" and "over-socialized" accounts, a new counter-discourse has emerged. Granovetter had described the society-economy overlap as embeddedness—a term he attributed to Karl Polanyi without sufficiently engaging with the meaning as Polanyi had intended. This might have allowed for a neoliberal appropriation of the term embeddedness to avail a certain discursive position whereby the overlap between society and economy could be studied with an opportunistic intent that social platforms could be utilized to find some "solutions" to many of the economic "problems." Beckert (2009) was right in pointing out that such neoliberal appropriation forestalled modern sociology from studying capitalism in the traditions set by Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel. My proposition in this paper is that such solipsistic reading of concepts makes it difficult to practice development in the traditions set by Rosenstein-Rodin and even Keynes.

Beckert's observation about the discursive politics of embeddedness was that Polanyi had not elaborated on this particular expression simply because this was not so much the central premise of his thesis as Granovetter made it out to be. This term indeed features only peripherally within Polanyi's (1944) big book *The Great Transformation*. The problem of (over)attribution arises from the fact that the embeddedness fetish of the 1980s conveniently

[12] Based on an address in which one of the chief economists of the Bank introduced Douglass North for his public lecture within the Bank in 2004.

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overshadowed what Polanyi was centrally concerned about, i.e., the pendulamic motion of "double movement". The central premise of Polanyi's book was that an opposition will eventually gain its momentum if the state took an extreme position embracing material prosperity while compromising on social justice. Seen from this perspective, Polanyi was more concerned about the issue of disembedding than embeddedness per se. He argued that a disembedding process was triggered during the early stages of industrial revolution in England not entirely from the market-centric behaviors of individual actors but from the lack of popular mobilization against the state endorsing of extreme commodification of land, labor, and money. One can almost sense something of a Malthusian nemesis about Polanyi's anticipation of political uprisings that would punctuate and reverse the individualistic-materialistic drive.

The discursive politics of embeddedness gives us a déjà vu about a more recent parallel that I discussed earlier on Putnam's (mis)appropriation of Bourdieu's work on social and cultural capital. As one scholar of international development put it during a debate in an Oxford college, complex theories such as the one put forth by Bourdieu need to be sufficiently simplified for them to be comprehended and used by the practitioners of foreign aid. In my view, it is as problematic to justify such "simplifying" especially to facilitate projects run by the first world in the third world geographies. At least the anthropologists might sense a new ethnocentrism here masked under the concerns for aid effectiveness.

In extending this observation into the specific subfield of competitiveness, I note the discursive burden in the way "value" is defined even before a position has to be taken as to whether the proposed policy should ensure higher profit for firms involved or bigger benefits for the broader society. The drive away from the "macroeconomic fundamentals" towards incorporating issues of coordination under approaches such as "cluster-based competitiveness" or "bootstrapping" which I discussed earlier still accepts that firms must show their competitive spirit by adding to the value of their products. What drives the competitiveness of a certain corporate entity or a product emerges from their clients' ranking of those products according to the extent to which these fulfill their needs (Guyer 2009). It is important to emphasize that valuation is often a social act, for example, of Christmas puddings having an added value during Christmas in societies that celebrate the festival. Beckart (2009) has discussed activities such as whale watching which have come to acquire value after societies embraced conservation against hunting of the nature and its nonhuman species. Zelizer (1979) pointed out that products such as life insurance could craft a market for themselves in nineteenth century America only after secularist-rationalist narratives helped the society overcome the moral dilemmas of "gambling with God." The ethical dimensions of competition are society-specific and are subjected to the character of cooperation among actors of production. Within the nation-states, both competition and cooperation are regulated through legally-coded policies which have come under the radar of the IFIs as the competitiveness agenda gained ground within the post-liberalization manifesto of development. Considered this way, what distinguishes an anthropological approach to competitiveness from economic is not the terminologies discussed but the ethical concerns that regulate the meaning of those terminologies. It would be erroneous to ignore the profound difference in the choice of perspective among those who take a substantivist stance, of not seeing market to be the superior above people but understanding the economic transformation (and by extension development) as a cultural and political phenomenon negotiated among several actors hailing from the different hegemonic spheres. My concern in this paper is that aid practitioners of the twenty-first century have appropriated development without addressing the inherent dilemmas as to how competition, reciprocity, and redistributive justice fit within aspirations for

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prosperity and happiness.[13] It is ironic indeed that modern economic anthropology's critique of the discursive narrative appropriating social organization into a narrow market mode of governance ended up pawns in the succeeding waves of hegemonic neoliberalism.

Such solipsistic capture of ideas and interpretations does away with ideological and methodological pluralism. Chris Hann and Keith Hart's (2011) point is that the decade of the 1960s which marked the end of the colonial era and the rise of the new (developmental) era generated a renewed global interest in the Polanyian notion of "double movement." The developmental implications for the formalist-substantivist debate within economic anthropology seemed to be that once the former colonial powers' commitment on third world development fizzled, the idea of socioeconomic embeddedness underwent a metamorphosis of meaning, from *oikos*-value of market to the profit-value of *oikos* (Hann and Hart 2011).

Conclusions

I have shown how the World Bank economists borrowed a relatively new notion of competitiveness and turned it into a hegemonic device that tightened the grip of neoliberalism on development. My review of the organizational restructuring within the Bank in pursuit of this new line of business proposes a political-intellectual reading of the contours of the Bank, academia and practice beyond the sweeping debates on economic liberalization. What emerges from my analysis of this organizational politics is a complex narrative explaining how the Bank appropriated the mavericks from economic sociology, heterodox economics, and business studies to build a framework that aimed to contest neoliberal hegemony within the Bank, but over time it became clear that the new framework ended up endorsing the clutch of conservative economics. I discussed how the well-meaning scholars and practitioners who had aspirations for the Bank to change were eventually appropriated into the system they had fought to dismantle. The process of appropriation is inevitably messy given that the interactive collaboration between leaders, followers, and critics necessary for incurring a firm directional change does not exist. The potential for change is certainly confined within the ideological boundaries of the Bank as well as the pragmatics of its organizational hierarchy. Crozier pointed out as early as in 1964 that crises are essential for organizational functioning, but that there are limits as to how deep can reform go even if a crisis presents an opportunity for change. Considering this, it is difficult to take the Bank's appetite for a change in its trajectory on industrial development seriously and cast any real hope that its neoliberal baggage is weakening anytime soon.

The rise of the competitiveness agenda did bring limited changes into the Bank's practice on industrial development. With an unapologetic dismissal of economic anthropology's cautioning that the process of disembedding had historically given rise to the market appropriation of non-market social relations, the Bank economists glossed over the social considerations of public policy—both in terms of the culturality of market operations as well as and the diversity in the way utilitarian rationality is interpreted across societies. It is a loss that the formalist hegemony of rational choice considerations superficially chartered a teleology of modernization and development, thus preempting any meaningful engagement with the spirit of civilizational progress and

[13] Even if the Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz went on to write a preface to a new (2001) edition to Polanyi's (1944) "The Great Transformation" calling on the developmental community to be guided by concerns of global social justice, this advice went largely unheeded among his colleagues at the World Bank. Stiglitz himself unceremoniously resigned from his job as the Chief Economist of the World Bank owing to the disagreement with the Bank's dominant narrative on economic development.

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prosperity. Deeply rooted into the Bank's neoliberal developmental practice but guided by its ability to mobilize the scholarship of globally renowned economists for appropriation, the Bank was able to partially reverse its earlier rejection of state regulation of markets to give some space for public role in private sector development. Policies and programs earlier been prohibited as "distortion of market" were now permitted under the new call for public support to help overcome the "market failures." However, even a modest reform such as this one could succeed only after carefully navigating through internal power struggles among the various networks, which coexisted conundrumically within the World Bank Group. The outcomes of such struggles depend on the nature and strength of conceptual founding, the astuteness of organizational handling, and the opportunities available within the limited timespans of global political economy. These struggles can lead to directional change, counter-hegemony, or a reversal.

Any restructuring needs to negotiate trade-offs that are both necessary and inevitable for their completion and for acquiring meanings. To the extent that the World Bank Group considers itself a trendsetter in development, it must problematize the changing landscapes and timescapes of international development and, if necessary, reassess the conceptual foundation they work under. Development designs have evolved over time to reflect the state of the world system, dating back the politics of exploitative rule under the colonial era not only to the postcolonial collaboration on development but also to the more recent conditions of structural adjustment and its failure to deliver growth in much of the third world. The Bank's dismissal of ethnography and critical studies and its refusal to consider anthropological knowledge for guidance is regrettable, while its chosen course for engagement with the proactive industrial policy debate seems conceptually biased. A large problem remains in the way it places its faith on the microeconomics of market to guide the macrosocial framework for development (Harriss-White 2005; Beckert 2009). This makes it virtually impossible to question its biased interpretation that social coordination is merely a means to achieve market competitiveness, thereby preventing any real engagement with the broader questions of provisioning and redistribution. The result, as in the case of competitiveness that I discuss here, is a stubborn recycling of scholarly imaginations into narrow measures of solipsism.

This paper argued that development—especially its subspheres of industrial transformation—cannot be fully captured in the problematics of market-led growth nor can they be achieved through rigid and piecemeal functions of a bureaucratic apparatus that remains vertically controlled. My analysis of the circumstances and motives behind the Bank re-organization towards its new practice agenda of export competitiveness is not necessarily aimed at offering policy advice or a critique of its effectiveness, but is offered as a reminder that scholarly discourses on social and political embeddedness have been set aside without consideration by those who should have been guided by its relevance for development. The World Bank's claim to be a "knowledge bank" cannot be taken too seriously when there is such stark inability to comprehend and engage with the classical writings on the global history of development.

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