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Fitting by Adjusting: A Field Study of Tanzanian and Ugandan Development Consultants Promoting Institutional Change

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of local development consultants, which are described as cultural interpreters, in promoting institutional reforms in Tanzania and Uganda. The empirical analysis seeks to answer the question how cultural interpreters translate new formal institutions into a specific context. The results show that they adapt their training programs to the specific context in order to ensure successful implementation. Furthermore, they have to consider how the participants of the training perceive the newly introduced institutions. The way in which they communicate with the participants is a central factor to ensure the application of new concepts.

JEL Codes: O22, O17, B59

1. Introduction

Despite several decades of development cooperation, Tanzania, and Uganda rank among the lowest countries according to the Human Development Index (Tanzania: 154 out of 189; Uganda: 162 out of 189; United Nations Development Programme 2018). Over the last years, there was a recurring prominence of sectoral programs managed by donor organizations, even if the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action intended to strengthen partner countries' national development strategies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2005 / 2008). In both countries, the general budget support (GBS) remained either stable at a low proportion of official development assistance (ODA) or decreased over the last years. As a consequence of the corruption scandal, Uganda no longer receives the GBS,

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whereas Tanzania still receives a share of ODA as GBS (European Commission et al. 2013; European Commission and World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group 2015; Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of Tanzania 2018). The low amount of GBS implies that aid programs under the leadership of donor organizations constitute the major part of ODA (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2018). Throughout the history of development practice since World War II and still true today, training programs are an essential activity of development organizations (Seidler 2016, 155). Development consultants engaged by donor organizations play a central role in implementing these programs to the affected population.

The aim of this paper is to develop a better understanding of the role of development consultants and to investigate how they transmit new formal institutions to the population. I designate these consultants as cultural interpreters as they translate new institutions for the relevant population by carrying out trainings and other capacity-building programs. The paper focusses on institutional development programs. The economic literature broadly acknowledges that institutions matter for development (cf. North 1990; Rodrik et al. 2004; Acemoglu and Robinson 2010; Boettke and Fink 2011; Barton 2015; Seidler 2016; Tylecote 2016; Almeida 2018; Gambus and Almeida 2018; Seidler 2018). This is not only a theoretical assertion but influences the practice of development cooperation. Thus, development organizations build a broad variety of programs on the insights of new institutional economics with the aim to promote good governance and the rule of law in developing countries (Burki and Perry 1998; Cameron 2004; Tamanaha 2015). Tamanaha (2015) even speaks of a new consensus replacing the neo-liberal Washington-Consensus in development cooperation. Many institutional reforms in development cooperation contain elements which stem from more developed countries (cf. Seidler 2018). The interplay of newly introduced formal rules with preexisting informal constraints is a complex real world phenomenon that cannot be analyzed merely from a theoretical perspective. The same is true for the role of development consultants intervening in this process. Rather, empirical analyses are necessary to investigate how development consultants transmit formal institutions into a specific context. Empirical studies broaden the understanding of specific contexts. Furthermore, they improve the existing understanding of development processes by explaining factors influencing institutional reforms. To study the role of development consultants, a qualitative research design is appropriate. Qualitative methods constitute an open approach. This means that they investigate not only given assumptions but enable the researcher to detect new and unexpected issues. An examination of development consultants can explain their role in promoting institutional change (for theoretical considerations cf. Grimm 2011; Brinkerhoff 2016; Silander and Silander 2016a; for the role of individual actors in institutional change cf. Seidler 2017 and 2018). In addition, this study can improve the existing understanding of institutional reforms.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 develops the concept of the cultural interpreter based on existing literature on political and cultural entrepreneurs. Section 3 presents the empirical study about the translation of new formal institutions by cultural interpreters and I reflect on the methods of the study. Section 4 presents the results of the interview study with cultural interpreters in Tanzania and Uganda. In Section 5 I discuss the results and draw policy conclusions for ODA. Section 6 concludes.

2. Local Development Consultants as Cultural Interpreters

The aim of institutional reforms is to implement new formal rules in a specific country environment (for the definition of formal rules North 1990; for a critique Hodgson 2006; for institutional reforms Andrews 2013; Tamanaha 2015; Brinkerhoff 2016; Sobel 2017). For reforms to be effective, merely changing formal rules is not sufficient (cf. Andrews and Bategeka 2013). Rather new rules have to be internalized by the affected population. Donor organizations often run training programs to familiarize the population with new formal rules and to ensure their implementation. Consultants typically conduct these trainings. In practice, the implementation process resembles a network with a variety of actors engaged. This paper focusses on the role of local development consultants[1] in Tanzania and Uganda and their role in translating new formal rules for the affected population.

I identify local development consultants as cultural interpreters. The concept is based on the literature on cultural and political entrepreneurs (cf. Wohlgemuth 2000; François 2003; Kubik 2003; Schnellenbach 2007; Zweynert 2009; Grimm 2011; Neck 2016; Scopa 2016; Silander and Silander 2016b). According to the existing literature, cultural or political entrepreneurs push through a political agenda and thus influence the political process (Wohlgemuth 2000; François 2003; Kubik 2003). Cultural entrepreneurs do this by linking the reform to the existing cultural heritage so that it appears familiar to their fellow citizens (Zweynert 2009). I adapt this concept with the aim of studying the relationship between institutions and individuals when introducing new institutions in a specific context.[2] The cultural interpreter is not a mere theoretical figure, but rather a concept that serves to identify specific individuals who become part of the empirical study.[3]

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1 The terms (local development) consultant, trainer, and cultural interpreter are used interchangeably. The participants of the study used the terms consultant or trainer to describe themselves. The denotation cultural interpreter stems from my own theoretical consideration about local development consultants.

2 The specification that they are cultural interpreters does not refer to "cultural" in the sense of creative industries or arts. For an investigation of the cultural entrepreneur in the field of the creative industry cf. Klamer (2011), Naudin (2018), Swedberg (2006).

The term cultural interpreter is used because the main task of these persons is to translate new formal rules for the domestic population. In opposition to the existing ideas about cultural entrepreneurs (cf. Kubik 2003; Zweynert 2009), cultural interpreters do not necessarily exhibit entrepreneurial characteristics. Rather, their specialization is in conducting trainings for the local population. Thus, the necessary competences of cultural interpreters are methodical skills for imparting new rules to the local population. In addition to transmitting ideas the communicative process is at the core of their activities. Therefore, the wording of an "interpreter" is chosen. These persons speak the "language" of the various actors involved in the reform process (cf. Brinkerhoff 2016, 233). The role of cultural interpreters has to be distinguished from classical interpreters focussing only on the translation of the language. Cultural interpreters deal with different perceptions of institutions based on socialization in specific cultural spheres. I apply the definition of culture by Spranz, Lenger and Goldschmidt (2012). Accordingly, culture is "the on-going interplay between formal rules and informal constraints that emerges in the historical development of every society and must be learned (and reflected) by every individual in the course of his or her socialization" (*ibid.*, 462). The notion of culture needs to be differentiated from context, which comprises the existing formal rules (e.g., laws) and informal constraints (e.g., habits, codes of conduct) but excludes the way in which individuals make sense of them. Thus, context designates the institutional setting independent from individuals. Nevertheless, it matters how individuals make sense of the institutions which surround them. As the cultural interpreter deals with these different understandings, the interplay between the cultural interpreter and the respective participants matters, which takes place in a communicative process.

Cultural interpreters have to be familiar with the Western and the domestic culture to be able to perform the cultural translation. As I focus only on local development consultants, cultural interpreters are by definition conversant with the domestic culture. Nevertheless, cultural interpreters have to investigate the constraints and opportunities existing in the specific context they are working in (Silander and Silander 2016b, 195), which can differ even inside a country. The familiarity with the Western culture can stem either from staying abroad or from working within Western development organizations (cf. Seidler 2016, 164). The comprehension of Western culture is necessary as most of the institutions introduced in developing countries originate from Western countries. Cultural interpreters have to capture the purpose of these institutions and translate them to the domestic population. In addition, they have to be conversant with the existing formal rules and informal constraints in order to perform this task. By implementing new formal institutions and being in interaction with the local

[3] As cultural entrepreneurs are quite rare in reality (cf. Brinkerhoff 2016), the concept of the cultural interpreter is more convenient for an empirical investigation.

population, cultural interpreters can be seen as facilitators between individuals and institutions.

The main task of cultural interpreters is to enable institutional reforms by conducting trainings. They communicate the reform to the population by applying familiar patterns. Familiarity with the newly introduced concept is a necessary premise for successful institutional transfers (Seidler 2016, 157). Thus, they translate the reform to the importing culture. One possible way of communicating the new concepts is to tie it in with established patterns, thereby focusing on compatible elements of the new institutions in the given context (cf. Zweynert 2009, 352). For example, cultural interpreters translate new ideas by using argumentative patterns that sound familiar to the local population and thereby increase the acceptance of the reform. It is also possible that these argumentative patterns which cultural interpreters use contain elements of the historical past and the cultural legacy (cf. Kubik 2003, 319, 342 ff.). This implies that they are familiar with hitherto existing institutions (cf. Brinkerhoff 2016, 57). Accordingly, their task can also be described as interpreting between different cultures. Unlike entrepreneurs, their incentive is not to seek for profit but to initiate change in their countries (cf. Grimm 2011, 454). This does not exclude a critical attitude towards ODA but requires the willingness to change the situation in their country.

I am convinced that documenting the actions of cultural interpreters and to analyze them with regard to processes of institutional change promises to improve the existing understanding of institutional reforms. Thus, an empirical investigation of cultural interpreters is necessary.

3. Methods

Study Design

As there is no qualitative research on the role of cultural interpreters in promoting institutional change so far, an explorative study design is appropriate. The interest of the research project is to capture the perspective of the cultural interpreters of their role in translating new concepts in a specific context (cf. Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke 2010). As institutional transfers often fail, the aim of this qualitative study is to investigate the role of the people involved in transmitting new formal institutions. Listening to these people enables economists to learn how to improve the process of institutional transfers (cf. Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke 2010; Schlüter 2010). Qualitative interviews are an appropriate tool to identify the subjective patterns of the interviewees. The construction of the interview guide followed Helfferich (2009) and was based on preliminary considerations to investigate the role of the cultural interpreter in practice. The interview guide comprised a section about the process of translating new

concepts in a specific context as well as the challenges when doing so (see Appendix 1).[4] Expert interviews were conducted with local development consultants performing trainings in Tanzania and Uganda. The interviews were semi-structured (Flick 2014).

Access to the Field

The interviews were embedded in a period of field studies (six weeks in Uganda; six weeks in Tanzania). I had working places at two German nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), one based in Kampala and one in Dar es Salaam. This allowed me to use their infrastructure (internet access, printers, electric generator) and I had daily interface with local and German staff. The research was neither connected to the work of the NGOs nor to any other organization or research project. Besides the interviews, I talked to various actors working in the development cooperation (national and multinational donor organization as well as NGOs). The background discussions with these actors were important to adapt my theoretical concept to the field as well as to get in contact with potential participants for the study. Due to "short time planning" in Uganda and Tanzania, most appointments were settled on site. None of the participants were recruited beforehand.

Sampling and Recruitment

For sampling, a deductive theoretical sampling strategy was chosen (Patton 2015, 288 f.). Only local development consultants (i.e., Tanzanians or Ugandans) were considered for the sample. The trainers included in the sample worked either directly for an NGO, a consulting firm, or as independent consultants. As many donor organizations outsource the training to NGOs and consulting firms, a distinction between these consultants was not maintainable. Their common characteristic is that donor organizations hire them as trainers or that they conduct capacity-building for NGOs. Consultants from Western countries performing trainings in Tanzania and Uganda were excluded. Additionally, only consultants working for projects with a focus on institutional change were interviewed. Thus, infrastructure projects were ruled out, as they do not focus on the introduction of new formal institutions. In total, consultants from three different types of projects were included in the sample (cf. Table 1). The fields of work were not selected in advance but were considered in Tanzania and Uganda as fitting to the role of cultural interpreters in promoting institutional change. Some of the consultants were working for different projects as they

[4] The challenges cultural interpreters face are not addressed in this paper as it focusses on the process of translation.

were specialized in conducting trainings instead of being specialized in a specific topic. To recruit participants a snowballing technique was used (Helfferich 2009; Patton 2015, 298). After the interview, the participants were asked if they know other consultants which might be interested in participating. In some cases, a phone call in advance of the interview ensured that the participants fit the deductive theoretical sampling strategy.

Table 1

Sample of the Field Study (n=14)

	Tanzania	Uganda
Gender		
Female	1	3
Male	6	4
Projects		
Good governance	5	1
Finance	1	5
Agriculture	1	1

Data Collection

I conducted 14 face-to-face interviews with local development consultants (7 in Kampala; 7 in Dar es Salaam). The setting was chosen by the participants and was either at a public place or in their office (Uganda: two at a public place, five in office; Tanzania: four at a public place, three in office). The language of the semi-structured interviews was English. The interviews lasted between 32 and 58 minutes. No remuneration was granted for participating in the study. I conducted the interviews in Kampala in June 2014 and the interviews in Dar es Salaam in September and October 2014. The three months in between the field studies were used to prepare the field study in Tanzania. Based on the experiences from Uganda I slightly adapted the interview technique. I documented the data collection by taking notes on the recruitment process, the interview setting (including potential interruptions of the conversation), and the post-interview phase. The notes were used to facilitate the interpretation of data, if necessary. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim following the simple transcription system of Dresing and Pehl (2013, 20 ff.).

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using qualitative content analysis adapted from Mayring (2014) and Schreier (2012). The coding frame presenting how cultural inter-

preters translate formal institutions into a specific context was developed inductively by progressive summarizing and subsumption (Mayring 2014). To generate the coding frame, three interviews were chosen according to a maximum variation strategy. The first categories were created by comparing codes across interviews (progressively summarizing). Afterwards, relevant segments of other interviews were either subsumed under the existing coding frame or additional categories were created if necessary (subsumption). In a pilot phase, the preliminary coding frame was applied to four interviews (two from Tanzania; two from Uganda), which I recoded after 10 – 14 days. The resulting coding frame was checked for face validity (Schreier 2012, 186). The final coding frame was applied to all interviews. Five interviews were recoded to ensure reliability by comparing codes across points in time (Schreier 2012, 167).

Limitations

The study has several limitations: due to the situation in the field I was not able to conduct all interviews in projects with the same subject, such as good governance. Based on the diversity of projects it is not possible to discuss every project separately. Thus, the process of adaptation is described in general but not with regard to the specific sector. Nevertheless, the interviews yield comprehensive information about the role of cultural interpreters in transmitting new formal institutions.

In addition, the interview language might have caused misunderstandings (cf. Choi et al. 2012), even if all participants had sufficient language skills. However, the interviews were neither in my native language nor in the native language of any of the participants. Different understandings due to language issues and the cultural background might have caused different interpretations during the data analysis (cf. Carter and Bolden 2012; González y González and Lincoln 2006).

4. Results

The interviewees described different ways how they translated new formal institutions into a specific context. The focus of the interviews was on the role of cultural interpreters in conducting trainings. As already described in Table 1, the consultants ran trainings on a variety of topics. Concerning the subjects of the training, the trainers depended on NGOs or donor organizations and were not able to influence agenda setting (UG_I_2; UG_I_6)[5]. Within the given

[5] Extracts from the field research are cited as follows: TZ and UG indicate the country of the field research, i.e., Tanzania (TZ) or Uganda (UG). “I” indicates an interview. The numbers are chosen arbitrarily to order the material.

framework, they could adapt the curriculum according to context and participants. The addressed participants of the trainings varied according to the subject and the aim of the training. In a decentralization program, for example, participants could be either citizens informed about their rights or professionals working for public institutions.[6]

The data analysis shows that cultural interpreters focused on (1) the context itself, (2) the participants of the training and, (3) the ways they communicated with the participants (see Table 2 for main results and Appendix 2 for the completely coding frame). First, it was of interest how trainers interacted with the given context. Second, it mattered how the people living in this context interpreted and applied the new concepts. This considered the interaction of the participants of the training with the given context. Third, to translate the new concepts, the methods to communicate mattered. Thus, the process of translation can be analyzed only in the interplay between cultural interpreters and participants against the background of the given context. The three domains described below are underlined by illustrative examples.[7]

Context

A main part of the descriptions of the cultural interpreters to ensure a successful translation of new concepts relates to context. They focused on two steps in handling context. First, they familiarized themselves with the specific context. In the sense of a translation process this corresponds to learning vocabulary and grammar. Second, they perceived an adaptation to the context as necessary to transmit new concepts.

Before delivering the training, cultural interpreters examined the context in which they were operating. They did so by using research methods, sometimes in collaboration with other institutions. An important aspect of this investigation was the assessment of needs or problems existing in the given context. This aspect, which they called the training needs assessment (TNA), was described by most of the trainers. The TNA informed consultants about context. Thus, they ran it before they developed the content of the specific training. During the TNA the trainers listened to the people to understand the needs they had.

> "When you are doing your TNA, your ears have to be open … The TNA brings out the relevance. Is it relevant to their needs? Does it answer their needs?" (UG_I_2)

The focus was mainly on existing problems. Only one consultant mentioned that he evaluated the needs as well as the assets which were available. Besides

[6] In most of the cases, participants receive remuneration. The influence of paying monetary rewards is not discussed in this paper.

[7] Some examples were slightly edited to improve readability.

Table 2

Main Results

Main Category	*Category*	*Example*
Context	Investigation of the Context	"Every day when you go, you get new information, you talk to the people. They are the ones who will tell you that if your project goes this and this and this. It will be much better and that's why we are saying that in this context is it very difficult if you go with a project with a 100 % preset kind of things to do" (TZ_I_2).
	Adaptation of the training to the context	"And then there's also the question of understanding the seasons. Especially if you're dealing with farmers. There are certain parts of the year when you shouldn't attempt to be conducting training. Because people are to busy doing this. So analyzing the seasonality and understanding what the activities are like, is likely to help you to schedule your training" (UG_I_6).
Participants	Considering patici-pants' under-standings	"So sensitivity, understanding that the other can understand the same thing in a different manner, you know, use of words, what words are used when, you know, words are neutral but they always have, they carry different meaning under different circumstances." (TZ_I_4)
	Provision of answers by the participants	"When you want people to actually understand more, give them the opportunity to feel that they are sharing ideas. Don't talk to them, you see, in just talking to them you know you are supposed to do this, this is like this and this and this. People will think they are in a lecture. But you are not a teacher, you are just a facilitator, trying to ensure that there is a discussion. So, I find that it kind of like elicits more positive responses than going and teaching them." (UG_I_4)
Communication	Application of meth-ods to communicate	"Say for example savings. I can do it. It's possible. So, we develop a song around savings and how we can improve savings using a song. So like (singing): Saaavings, saaaaving, savings in the morning, savings in the evening. Saaavings (stops singing). Like that. It enforces that you can save in the morning, that you can save in the evening. The issue is: SAVE!" (UG_I_2)

assessing the needs in advance of the training, it might also happen that they appeared during the training sessions.

Cultural interpreters mentioned various ways of adapting the training to the specific context. They described two reasons for doing so. First, disregarding the context irritated the participants and thus made the learning atmosphere less productive. Second, the adaptation of the training to context facilitated the learning process.

Several trainers experienced that they could not conduct trainings when they ignored the cultural practices of a specific context. A Tanzanian trainer designated context-specificity as a crucial criterion for successful trainings. He depicted that trainings had to be sensitive to the existing gender norms. Gender norms constitute a part of the informal constraints which are specific to each context. Being sensitive to these gender norms helped the participants to feel comfortable during the sessions.

> "Practical example: We need to do some training, so put a room together, the usual stuff, you know and without consideration you just put ladies in the front, men at the back and whatever. So we start training, nobody is going to listen, the men feel offended, the women feel insecure. Their natural role will be the women in the back, men in front, you may not like that, but that's how they could listen to you better. Now you change the roles, so they respect you, they don't want to argue with you, but these ladies are sitting there totally uncomfortable, the men feel totally disregarded, disrespected and they just say let this thing go and then we go home and sleep. So you are busy talking, they clap, they will do everything but they are not paying attention at all. They're totally offended." (TZ_I_4)

Besides considering the habits, the cultural interpreters adapted various domains of their training to the context, including language, terminology, and the concepts to be communicated themselves.

Language as an institution constitutes a central element of each context. The aim of adapting the language was to make the concepts comprehensible. Even if some trainings were conducted in English, many cultural interpreters described that they translated their sessions to local languages. As Kiswahili is widely spoken in Tanzania, the consultants mainly had to deal with the question whether to run their training either in English or in Kiswahili. On the contrary, the Ugandan consultants were concerned with a variety of local languages. Finding a participant within the group able to translate the training to the local language or including more visual aids were potential solutions to deal with this issue. In practice, different languages were often combined.

Additionally to the language, cultural interpreters modified terms, names, and examples they used according to the context. Even if the general curriculum was already set, cultural interpreters changed elements of the training. The aim of the adaptation was to link the concepts which they translated to something familiar in the recipients' known context. A Ugandan consultant running train-

ings on financial literacy described that she adapted the names of the stories she told during the training according to the predominant religion. Even if the underlying concept remained the same, she employed different names and examples which were part of the given context.

> "Even the names of the stories, in the stories. You need to adapt them. If you know you are going to a Muslim classroom, or whatever you are going to communicate, you know there are many Muslims in that place. Mary becomes Mariam. Very simple. Josef becomes Yusuf. (…) So, when you talk about what they know, they relate to the training very fast. So, when's a Muslim community, you know there's a Mariam. It has to be there. It could be part of the participants. So, when you bring it to about Mariam didn't pay very well and so on they connect emotionally. And that is assisting your learning." (UG_I_2)

By relating to elements, the participants knew from their community, the consultants anchored the new concept in familiar surroundings. The cultural interpreters experienced that this adaptation facilitated the participants' process of understanding. By adjusting the terminology, the concept to be translated remained the same.

In some cases, development consultants even went one step further and adapted the concepts themselves to the context. Here, the motivation was not to facilitate the learning of the participants but to provide context-specific solutions. A Tanzanian consultant, running trainings in the public sector, explained that he always tailored solutions to specific circumstances. The only exception were legal requirements, for example international accounting standards, which had to be respected.

> "We do tailor recommendations, for example we did a study of how local councils can improve revenue collection. So we went down, spoke to those people who are collecting revenue, the people who are paying taxes and then we came up with recommendations of like outsourcing. Instead of council collecting, let it outsource. Now they said okay we shall outsource it, but we know how much it is a problem to collect. They know we can do another study to see the potential, revenue potential of each source of tax. So most of these applications we do recommend are practical. Practical and tailored to the circumstances." (TZ_I_6)

Participants

Cultural interpreters described various aspects related to the participants of their trainings. They reacted to the participants and engaged them in the sessions. Again, adjustments of the training were described. In addition, some consultants discussed the handling of different understandings of the same concept. Others demonstrated the benefit of new ideas to improve acceptance. Furthermore, they applied different strategies to ensure the application of the new concept by the participants.

The consultants adapted their sessions to the respective audience, much as they also made contextual adaptations. Cultural interpreters explained concepts in a different manner depending on the characteristics of the participants. Aspects mentioned were age, gender, and level of education. A Ugandan trainer with a specialization in finance described the variety of trainings she ran for different target groups. The staff of microfinance banks had different needs than potential customers not using the service of financial institutional or children in need of basic financial education.

To respond to the differences of the participant, the methods used by the trainers changed.

> "If you're talking to different groups, let's say difference can be gender. It can be educational level. It can be ethnic. It can be geographical. So, depending on what the difference is you could use different techniques. For example, if I'm training people who are fully literate, they can read, they can write, they can follow me in English, then I know that I do not need to utilize visual aids that much. We can even lecture and debate and concepts will get through. So, it depends on the difference." (UG_I_6)

Besides, trainers had to be able to handle different levels of understanding by the participants. With regard to this aspect, understanding played a role on different levels. First, understanding was described in the sense of a learning process. Second, consultants referred to understanding in the sense of subjective interpretative patterns. Especially the second aspect required that the trainers showed sensitivity for dissimilar mind-sets. Even if words were identical, cultural interpreters considered that they carried different meanings in different circumstances. A Tanzanian trainer described that he had to be aware that the participants understood the same things in a different way.

> "Now, training is a very personalized type of thing, it's got a lot of cultural aspects in it. If you don't understand the culture in a very Americanized English how the people are switched on, you know, how their minds are connected, you will never get a course, because you'll be speaking two different languages." (TZ_I_4)

This cultural interpreter reflected the provision of answers by the participants as a solution to handle different mind-sets.

> "Well, basically the best approach we take is to introduce the subject matter and get the people to tell us what this message does to them, more or less. I mean we want to discuss democracy, okay, what is their understanding of democracy, what is democracy to them, what could it mean, how they notice there is democracy or there is a lack of democracy, whatever. So you start engaging them at that level and let them provide the answers because their answers are more accurate than yours, because that's their life, okay?" (TZ_I_4)

Additionally, trainers discussed different understandings. They reflected that they did not act as a teacher in this part of the training. Rather they initiated a debate and included their own opinion in this discussion. Consultants described

the sharing of different opinions as necessary since participants did not accept the new concepts unless a common understanding was reached.

Cultural interpreters perceived that they could initiate change by these discussions but the transformation proceeded only slowly. One trainer described that he could initiate a reflection about "good" or "bad" customs but the participants had to decide if they changed their behavior or not.

> "But for them they need to start themselves. To tell, that is fine, our ancestors did it like this, can we now today do the same or we can change a little bit. Then they will start to know, okay, let us change, we need to change this and this" (TZ_I_3).

Nevertheless, in some cases trainers did not reach a consensus among different mind-sets. In this case, they had to decide if they still wanted to pursue their idea or if they dropped it because they could not force the participants to accept it.

Moreover, the consultants themselves provided solutions to improve the situation of the participants. Some trainers described that they not only presented their solutions but also developed them in collaboration with the participants. Trainers characterized their role in doing so as active. Several consultants illustrated during the training how the participants could benefit by applying the new concepts. To initiate a change, it was necessary that the participants realized the opportunities of the new concepts. A consultant working with farmers in Tanzania described the realization of benefits as an incentive for the participants to adopt new concepts.

> "The incentive is, if it is adding any value to our life as compared to the previous ones. That is, if there is any value that becomes a very good incentive." (TZ_I_2)

Besides demonstrating solutions, the consultants let the participants apply the new concepts. This happened either during the training session or accompanying the training program. Some techniques to ensure a durable application were integrated in the training, such as the development of a plan for future activities. In this case, the trainers had to ensure that the plan was feasible and built on available opportunities. In the case of a financial literacy program the trainer ensured that the participants integrated alternatives to a bank account in their saving plans if bank accounts were not available. In some cases the consultants remained available after the end of the training if needed. This was especially important for more technical training programs, such as accounting. Trainers even stated that they returned to the target group or cooperated with local capacity builders to ensure a durable application. The way to ensure a durable application mainly depended on the budget available for the training program.

Communication

As cultural interpreters translated new concepts into a specific context, communication was a central topic of the interviews. Trainers intensively described a variety of methods they used communicating new concepts to the participants. Furthermore, consultants depicted the combination of several channels of communication as a successful way of translating new concepts.

When describing the methods, consultants emphasized that they applied different methods depending on the context and the participants. Usually, several methods were combined even within one training. One type of method described were the ones used in a classical classroom training. The trainers applied communication and education methods such as power point presentations, handbooks, and picture cards. The usage of these methods depended on the literacy of the participants. Besides these methods, which focused on the trainer, several methods were applied to engage the participants. Most trainers mentioned that they use group discussions. Other methods described are role plays, case studies, the sharing of experiences, simulations, or composing songs around key themes. In one program, an on-the job training was conducted, which was uncommon compared to other training sessions.

In some cases, no training was conducted because other methods were more suitable. An example were farmers or fishermen who could not attend the training sessions because of their job. Several trainers of a financial literacy program transmitted a radio broadcast as an alternative, because radio was a frequently used medium and people could listen to it during their work. A Ugandan consultant in charge of capacity building with respect to the decentralization process used a SMS tool to increase the political participation of the population.

> "We have a SMS platform where we now engage the citizens, we send blast messages on the performances of their leaders and facilitate to a communication between the citizens and their political leaders. Because you can be able to send a message, we have a system here, it comes and it can be identified that you want to talk to that particular counsellor. So the information is rooted to the counsellor and the counsellor can be able to respond. If you have a service delivery challenge as a citizen, you send a message. It is rooted to the counsellor and the counsellor can be able to respond." (UG_I_4)

These non-training methods were in line with the existing circumstances, as they only worked when radios or mobile networks were available. An alternative method to communicate new concepts outside training sessions was the dissemination of civic education material.

Another aspect mentioned with respect to communication was the application of different channels of communication. Trainers described that they used various channels of communication to send the same message. By doing so, they intended to facilitate the learning process of the participants.

5. Discussion

The empirical results described here are beneficial to refine the theoretical concept of the cultural interpreter and to improve the understanding of their task in promoting institutional change. In contrast to the assumption that cultural interpreters are familiar with the existing context and culture, a major role they take on is the investigation of the context. Despite their general knowledge about context and culture of the country, the trainers have to analyze the needs and opportunities in the training specific context. Another task which has not been considered so far is adaptation. Consultants do not apply the given curriculum one-to-one but adapt it to the context. The descriptions of the trainers are in line with the assumption that they incorporate familiar concepts to anchor the new concepts in context (cf. Brinkerhoff 2016, 57; Zweynert 2009, 352).

Some consultants go even one step further and not only adapt the modalities of training but also the concepts to be introduced. Rather than making the new concepts appear fitting to the context (ibid.), cultural interpreters make them fitting by adjusting them. Or to state it in the sense of interpreters: If a mere translation is impossible, new words must be created. By doing so, the consultants deviate from the given first-best institutions and develop context specific second-best institutions (cf. Rodrik 2008; Tamanaha 2015). Following the welfare economic concept of second-best (Lipsey and Lancaster 1956; Boadway 2017; Lipsey 2017), I define second-best institutions as institutions which deviate from the theoretical optimum but take into account existing local constraints (Rodrik 2008). Thus, they constitute real optimal institutions for the constraints given in the specific context. These second-best institutions outperform best practice institutions, as they are local optima (Becker and Goldschmidt forthcoming). This is in line with the results of Andrews and Bategeka (2013, 18) who demonstrate that blueprints are one reason for limited success of institutional reforms in Uganda. In the present study, only some trainers describe that they perform an adaptation of concepts. This is in line with the findings of Seidler who claims that only few intermediaries are able to perform an adaptation (Seidler 2018). I argue that these trainers respond innovatively and act not only as cultural interpreters in the sense of translating reform concepts. Rather these individuals even go one step further. When inventing new institutions the consultants are not only inspired by the context but also by the perspective of the participants. Nevertheless, most of the trainers act solely as cultural interpreters and do not create new institutional forms. These results make a first contribution to the question of how institutional transplants can be adapted to a specific context. As far as I know, the existing literature reveals no answers to this question (cf. Seidler 2016, 158).

Cultural interpreters have to consider that individuals interpret the same formal rules, informal constraints, and the interplay between them in a different way when they are conducting trainings. Here, the theory of shared mental

models plays a crucial role (Denzau and North 1994; Mantzavinos, North, and Shariq 2004; Wrenn 2006; World Bank 2015a). The formation of mental models depends on personal experiences as well as on the culture in which the individuals are socialized (Wrenn 2006). As no two individuals ever share exactly the same experiences in life, every person exhibits a distinct mental model. Nevertheless, persons with a common cultural background exhibit similar mental models (Denzau and North 1994). Cultural interpreters need a sensitivity for mental models to be able to deal with different understandings. This sensitivity was not included in preliminary theoretical considerations. Their familiarity with the domestic as well as with the Western culture facilitates their role to deal with different mind-sets. However, a mere investigation of the formal rules and informal constraints is not sufficient to perform the role of the cultural interpreter. In addition, they have to consider how the individuals make sense of this environment. Nevertheless, the sensitivity remains a rather personal characteristic than the fulfilment of an assigned task. Further research should address which individuals exhibit this characteristic.

The joint development of solutions by cultural interpreters is a strategy to deal with different mental models. Thus, the role of the participants has to be strengthened. They should not be seen as students to be instructed but as experts for local challenges and opportunities. In such a setting, the cultural interpreter acts not as a teacher but as a facilitator proposing solutions for the problems at hand.

The empirical results demonstrate that communication is a central aspect in translating new formal institutions into a specific context. Cultural interpreters express that it is not only communication in general but also the methods to facilitate the communication process that matter. Thus, they need methodological skills about training methods and their application. As many trainers work on distinct topics as well as with participants with different age and educational levels they have to adjust their communication accordingly. Again, cultural interpreters need sensitivity for the setting and the ability to adapt the training to it. In addition, cultural interpreters translate between English and various local languages. When doing so, they consider not only the vocabulary, but also the meaning linked to the terms.

My results correspond with existing policy challenges, which are described in the literature. First, development programs have to be adapted to a specific context. Transferring blueprints to developing countries cannot provide solutions for complex problems (Rodrik 2008; Andrews 2013; Andrews and Bategeka 2013; Seidler 2016 and 2017). Even within a country, flexible solutions are needed to fit local conditions. Second, cultural interpreters can develop such context-specific solutions in interaction with the affected population. This implies strengthening a bottom-up approach in ODA (Easterly 2008; Easterly 2013; Graham 2015). Furthermore, the negotiation process of solutions responsive to the local conditions deserves more attention than the transfer of existing

and only seemingly best practices. In a bottom-up approach, cultural interpreters play a central role in promoting institutional change. Besides the general characteristics of cultural interpreters, these persons require a contextual and cultural sensitivity and the ability to invent new institutional forms. As individuals to perform this task are rare, further research on cultural interpreters and entrepreneurs is needed. It should be investigated which individuals are able to perform the role of inventing new institutional forms. Furthermore, strategies to encourage individuals to perform such tasks have to be explored.

6. Conclusion

I argue that we need individuals who are familiar with the culture as well as with the existing institutions to realize context specific solutions in developing countries. The empirical analysis of cultural interpreters in Tanzania and Uganda demonstrates their central role for successfully translating new concepts into a specific context. In a first step, they have to understand the target context and adapt the elements of the training to the given institutional setting. As the application of new institutions is influenced by the way how individuals make sense of them, they have to consider how the participants perceive the new concepts. To translate the new concepts, cultural interpreters apply a variety of communication methods.

Many programs in development cooperation are still based on best practices. Introducing best practice solutions fails in most of the cases as they usually do not fit to the existing informal constraints of a given context. Thus, strengthening a bottom-up approach is necessary to enable contextual solutions, which are effectively applied by the population. These contextual solutions may deviate from theoretically optimal solutions. Nevertheless, they can still outperform the latter in practice as they fit given constraints and opportunities. Even if the development of contextual solutions is time-consuming, it is more useful than wasting time and money for the implementation of ineffective blueprints. The role of development consultants has to be strengthened, as they are able to adapt existing reform concepts to the context and translate it to the affected population. That these persons are not able to affect agenda setting demonstrates one of the challenges in the existing ODA. On a policy level, local actors need more responsibility to influence development processes.

This paper does not analyze the challenges cultural interpreters face when they translate new formal institutions into a specific context. This issue should be addressed by further research. In addition, more research is needed to investigate which persons are able to fulfil the role of a cultural interpreter and which persons are able to go even further and invent new institutional forms. Additional research should also explore how the participants of the trainings perceive the newly introduced concepts as well as the training itself.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Interview Guide

Professional expertise

1. Can you tell me something about your current work and your professional background?

1.1 How did you come to work on these issues?

1.2 For how many years have you been involved in this work? Have you done anything similar before?

1.3 Have you worked in other countries as well? Have you implemented reforms in these countries?

Reform Concept

2. What is your perception of the reform?

2.1 Can you please describe the basic features of the reform!

2.2 In which ways is this reform similar to other reforms that you know?

2.3 What is your personal opinion about the reform?

2.4 In your opinion, does the reform have a chance to succeed? If so, what would success look like?

2.5 How can the reform contribute to/hinder the economic development of your country?

Contextual Factors

3. What should be considered when implementing reform for Ugandan/Tanzanian society?

3.1 Are there any parts of the reform which you consider as not (practically) feasible for this context here? Are there any parts which are especially suitable for this context?

3.2 Have you ever observed any difficulties when rules introduced by the reform concepts do not fit the preexisting norms and conventions of society? If yes: What kind of difficulties have there been? What can be done in such cases? Do you have any opportunity to interfere in such situations?

3.3 How does society respond to the reform?

3.4 Which parts of the reform don't make any sense to the people here? Why?

3.5 How would you describe your relationship to society on the one hand and the development organization on the other?

Implementation and Communication of the Reform Concept

4. How do you explain the reform to society?

4.1 What kind of argumentative patterns do you use when communicating the reform?

4.2 When was the last time that you talked to someone about the reform?

4.3 Do you use different words for different groups when you talk about the reform?

4.4 Are there local ideas which are similar to the ones defined in the reform concept? Are there local concepts which are opposed to those of the reform?

4.5 Do words exist in Luganda / Swahili which can be used to translate the reform (directly)? Are there local words to describe the reform concept?

Miscellaneous

5.1 If you could create your own reform on this topic: what would be the content of the reform and how would you try to implement it?

5.2 Is there anything else that we haven't discussed that seems important to you?

Appendix 2 Coding Frame

Context		
Investigation of the context	Assessment of needs in the context	
Adaptation of the training to the context	Adaptation of language	
	Adaptation of terminology	
	Adaptation of concepts	

Participants		
Adaptation of the training to the participants		
Dealing with different understandings	Consideration of participants' understanding	
	Provision of answers by the participants	
	Discussion of different understandings among cultural interpreters and participants	
Demonstration of beneficial solutions for the participants		
Application of new concepts	Application of new concepts by the participants	
	Ensuring durable application by the participants	
Miscellaneous participants		

Communication		
Methods to communicate	Training methods	Trainer centered methods
		Cooperative methods
	Non-training methods	
Usage of multiple channels of communication		