



An analysis of

Danish Development Strategies

and

Denmark's Development Cooperation with China

Development and International Relations:
Global Refugee Studies
Master's Thesis

October 2023

Aalborg University

By Samantha Pedersen Young

Student number: 20211486

Supervisor: Vibeke Andersson

Characters in total (incl. spaces): 166.344

Number of pages: 69

ABSTRACT

The overarching purpose of this thesis has been to examine how Denmark's current development strategy compares to former strategies and how or if the framework of Strategic Sector Cooperations (SSC) under the umbrella of Danish development strategy contributes to a socially just transition in the context of Denmark's development cooperation with China. Additionally, I have sought to analyse how the concept of just transition is implemented in concrete examples of Danish development cooperation as it is a concept highlighted on several occasions by DANIDA and within the Danish development strategy. The objective of the thesis has thus been to investigate how Denmark's SSC framework and development strategy compare to past strategies and tools as the thesis aim to attain clarity as to whether Denmark's development strategy and approach has developed significantly in light of the various historical criticism of inefficiency, or if the strategies have merely been rebranded with trending buzzwords.

The research conducted in this study is qualitative and draws upon empirical data collected through an expert interview with a sector counsellor at the forefront of Danish development cooperation in China as well as several secondary sources. Additionally, it should be noted that the thesis draws upon an extensive existing body of literature on foreign aid which also adds an international perspective through which developments of Danish aid strategies could be understood. The empirical data is interpreted by use of new institutionalist theory which has provided lenses through which the analysis is driven.

The thesis finds, that despite an array of critical junctures occurring throughout the history of Danish development assistance, the focus areas of the strategies have not drastically changed. While it is apparent that there have been some thematic changes, not least in light the millennial development goals and later the Sustainable Development Goals, it is only natural that there has been space for some ebbs and flows within the prioritisations, but these are not necessarily found to constitute a drastic change or paradigm shift in the focus areas of Danish development assistance.

In recent years, one of the main changes seem to be that despite Denmark being regarded as a moral superpower and its aid as altruistic, the increased inclusion of focus areas such as securitization seem a blatant contradiction to the ethos surrounding development aid. Furthermore, Denmark falling short of its objectives for development assistance in 2022 gives

an indication that Denmark might be on its way to losing its title as a good samaritan despite its efforts to hold on to the façade.

While SSCs were originally presented as a new tool and framework for Danish development cooperations, the concept is not found to be fundamentally different from previous guidelines and framework. Essentially, one could argue that the cooperations build on the same premise as the first bilateral technical assistance programme of 1962. One of the challenges identified within the SSC frameworks and its implementation is found to be the balancing of aid activities such as capacity building and the secondary outcomes of diplomacy and trade. However, it is important to acknowledge that the SSC framework is not found lacking in legitimacy or potential to meet its mandate as policy changes are considered fundamental to fostering development. Furthermore, there are signs of Denmark trying to adapt the project management system to make a more conducive and efficient framework approach.

Finally, Denmark's development approaches are largely found to be recycled although often rebranded with trendy buzzwords of the given period. Just transition could arguably be considered as one of these. Despite its inclusion in the latest Danish development strategies and being a focus area of the SSC framework there does not seem to be clear indications that the development approach effectively contributes to the facilitation of a just transition, at least within the context of China. This in part is due to constraints of the cooperation and the limitations of influence it has on China.

The existing body of literature is riddled with debates on effectiveness of aid with the predominant body of literature criticizing the lack of effectiveness at least in terms of aid facilitating economic development. In my considerations for further research, I point towards a broadened approach to understanding development and traditional topics such as poverty. Ultimately, I highlight an increasing interest in a subject for further research, namely tri-lateral cooperation in which a country of the Global North collaborates with a high-middle income country of the Global South in providing development aid to a country of the Global South. My hypothesis would be, that such cooperation might increase aid effectiveness, but it remains to be seen.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCP - Chinese Communist Party

DAC - Development Assistance Committee

GDK - Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate

GHG - Greenhouse Gas

GDI - Gross Domestic Income

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

GNI – Gross National Income

ILO - International Labour Organisation

IMF - International Monetary Fund

MDG - Millennium Development Goal

MFA - Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NIEC - New International Economic Order

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PLO - Palestine Liberation Organisation

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SSC – Strategic Sector Cooperation

UN – United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Countries with Strategic Sector Cooperations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.; OECD, 2021)	11
Figure 2 Fundamentals of Strategic Sector Cooperations.....	12
Figure 3 Scholars' use of the four new institutionalisms: rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2010, p. 20)	19
Figure 4 Paths to critical junctures (Kickert & Van der Mee, 2011, p. 479).....	24
Figure 5 Danish aid from 1959/60 to 1970/71 in million DKK (Brunbech P. Y., 2014, p.149)	36
Figure 6 China poverty headcount as percentage of population. Source: data.worldbank.org	41

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Overview of the four new institutionalisms (Schmidt, 2010, p. 5).....	20
Table 2 Comparison of Danish Development Strategies (Kjær, 2022, p. 255)	51

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Abbreviations	iii
List Of Figures	iv
List Of Tables	iv
Introduction	1
Research Objectives	2
Research Field Justification	2
Project Structure	4
Literature Review	4
Danish Development Assistance	5
Foreign Aid	8
Concepts	10
Strategic Sector Cooperation	10
Just Transition	15
Theory	17
New Institutionalism	17
Rational Choice Institutionalism	20
Sociological Institutionalism	21
Discursive Institutionalism	22
Historical Institutionalism	22
Path Dependency	23
Critical Junctures	24
Methodology	25
Research Design	25
Methods	25
Comparative Analysis	26
Case Study	26
Semi-Structured Interview	27
Interview Respondent	28
Triangulation	28
Secondary Research	29
Observation	29

Limitations	30
History Of Development Assistance In Denmark	31
Understanding Development.....	31
Establishing A Timeline.....	32
Laying The Foundation From 1945 To 1962	32
A New Direction – The First Bilateral Development Assistance Programme From 1962 To 2000.....	34
The New Millennium Of “Sustainability” From 2000 To 2023.....	39
Introduction To The Case	40
The People’s Republic Of China.....	40
Denmark In China	43
Structure Of The Embassy Of The Kingdom Of Denmark In China	47
Analysis.....	48
Danish Development Strategies	49
Danida	54
Just Transition And Strategic Sector Cooperations In China.....	57
Critical Reflections	61
Conclusion	63
Further Research	64
Bibliography	66

INTRODUCTION

In 2015 leaders from nations across the world agreed to 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). Since then, the term “sustainable development” has increasingly been linked with grand societal challenges. The global SDGs can be seen as a way to address these challenges and therefore cover topics such as eradication of poverty and hunger, access to quality education, economic growth, and climate action.

Great praise from organisations such as Save the Children (2021) followed the launch of “The World We Share”, Denmark’s most recent strategy for development cooperation. The strategy was a result of a broad political agreement and was praised for its human rights-based approach to development and focus on building just societies, fighting poverty and inequality while addressing grand social challenges such as climate change.

In practice, the Danish strategy for development cooperation is implemented through partnerships and collaborations in the Global South. An example of these are the various strategic sector cooperations on sectors such as climate and energy, water and environment, food and agriculture, health and shipping. The overall objective of the strategic sector cooperations is to promote a socially just green transition fostering sustainable growth.

The strategy for development cooperation is introduced by stating that “*We live in a time of great upheaval*” where crisis and conflicts are reversing progress and development while climate change and exploitation of resources “*threaten our common future*” and that the strategy “*is fundamentally about solving the great challenges of our time with our partners*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021b, s. 4). The grandiose statements are hardly coincidental and the emphasis on *our common future* links back to the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development titled “Our Common Future” although better known as “The Brundtland Report” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The report was a call for action and for a global agenda for change with focus on long-term strategies for sustainable development and it is often referenced as being one of the first times that sustainability was regarded from a social, economic and environmental perspective.

However, are these new strategies and strategic sector cooperations merely old wine in new bottles or have the fundamental drivers behind the development efforts of the Danish

government changed over time? This conundrum leads to the following research question and sub-questions:

- How does Denmark's development strategy compare to former Danish development strategies and approaches and how does the framework for Strategic Sector Cooperations contribute to a socially just green transition and addressing the SDGs in the context of China?
 - How is the concept of a just transition integrated in the Danish development cooperations with China and are there indications of how this model might help address grand social challenges or are the grandiose statements a fallacy?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The thesis's objective is to investigate how Denmark's Strategic Sector Cooperations and development strategy compare to previous developments strategies and tools implemented by DANIDA as part of the Danish foreign service, as the thesis wishes to attain clarity as to whether or not Danish development strategy and approach has evolved significantly or if it is just rebrands itself with trending buzzwords and topics. In conjunction with examining the history of Danish development approaches the thesis attempts to ascertain whether the goal of a "just transition" is but a fallacy boasted by grandiose statements or if a just transition can realistically be facilitated within the field of development aid and if there is any indication towards this in the Danish approach to development cooperation with China.

RESEARCH FIELD JUSTIFICATION

The subject of development assistance is one that has many different approaches with each generation trying to come up with a solution to the grand challenges the world faces, justifiably so as the majority of individuals presumably wish that the challenges could be effectively addressed and solved by development assistance, aid or cooperations. However, the complex realities of the world evident in the academic literature of the topic show that there is no easy solution. The topic of development assistance and aid is one with a lot of scholarly work about despite it feeling like we are trapped on a hamster wheel with no end in sight as more "grand challenges" arise. In my opinion the aforementioned statements are what keep the research field of development assistance going – the bleeding hearts hoping to strike gold and find the all-encompassing answer. Therefore, I choose this research field for my thesis as Denmark presents itself as being optimistic that it can contribute to mitigating some of the grand

challenges the world is facing to a degree that makes it difficult not believe in their optimism. Thus, the Danish approaches piqued my curiosity as I want to ascertain whether or not their strategy and guiding principles are as altruist as many of the individuals I have met within the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the field of aid claim and whether or not Denmark's toolbox is equipped to potentially have an impact.

ACADEMIC RELEVANCE

Due to the broad scope of topics encumbered by the GRS programme this section will outline how the topic of the thesis is relevant to the GRS programme. GRS at Aalborg University is an MSc in Development and International Relations with a specialisation in Global Refugee Studies with a focus on refugees and forced migration. The programme covers topics such as processes of development, political, social and economic change and globalisation¹.

Personally, I've developed a particular interest in policy, development processes, green transition and climate change and how these concepts and grand challenges interact, address, mitigate or impact forced migration and fluxes of refugees. This interest has also been strengthened through my internship at the Royal Danish Embassy in Pretoria where I engaged with strategic sector cooperations, which is one of Denmark's approaches to development cooperation. My interest and curiosity for the field, the intersection with international relations, development and policymaking on a backdrop of grand challenges such as climate change, poverty, hunger and conflicts leading to forced displacement and refugees has also been strengthened through my job at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Beijing which acts as a so-called climate front post with several active development programmes.

Throughout this thesis I will seek to analyse how and if the Danish development strategies and approaches have evolved by using knowledge of concepts, theories and methodologies acquired throughout the GRS programme. The thesis tries to shed light on a core Danish development approach and how this has or hasn't changed over time. In Denmark's development strategy it is stated that EU-member states invest considerable resources in processing asylum applications and that these resources instead could be utilised to help more people if they are used in countries and regions neighbouring crisis and conflict zones (DANIDA, 2021). The Danish strategy for development cooperation also seeks to prevent internal displacement, which are people who for example due to natural disasters,

¹ <https://www.en.aau.dk/education/master/international-relations/global-refugee-studies>

environmental changes, hunger, or conflict have left their home country. The prevention is sought through “sustainable development” but how is this actually implemented and is it any different from the historical approaches to development and humanitarian aid? Thus, with my research question I will try to link the multi-disciplinary field of international relations and sub-categories such as global refugee studies and development by investigating the Danish strategy for development cooperation and the strategic sector cooperations.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

This section is added to provide a brief overview of the project’s structure. Following the introductory chapter and research area the thesis moves on to its primary chapters. Chapter 2 of the thesis examines existing literature within the field of foreign aid and contains a section with a particular focus on Danish development assistance. Chapter 3 introduces key concepts present throughout the thesis such as the strategic sector cooperations and just transition. Chapter 4 introduces and examines theory and concepts of new institutionalism which are used throughout the analysis in combination with methodologies introduced in Chapter 5 to understand and examine Danish development strategies and Denmark’s development cooperations in China. The 6th and 7th chapter of the thesis provide a thorough introduction to the history of Danish development assistance and an introduction to the case of Danish development cooperation in China, which leads to the analysis in chapter 8. The analysis is structured around key topics and starts by zooming in on Danish development strategies, DANIDA, just transition and strategic sector cooperation in China. The analytical section is followed by critical reflections in chapter 9, before the conclusion is found in chapter 10. Following the conclusion, the reader can find my preliminary reflections on further research in chapter 11.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on foreign aid and related concepts such as development assistance and development aid is extensive. Therefore, this section will attempt to present the current academic debates pertaining specifically to Danish development assistance and international approaches to foreign aid from a broader perspective and consider the general streams of thought regarding the field.

The literature for the review was collected from online search engines and academic databases such as Aalborg University Library and Google Scholar. Literature was identified by searching

the phases ‘Danish development assistance’, ‘Danish development aid’, ‘development assistance’, ‘development aid’, ‘Nordic development aid’, ‘Nordic development assistance’, ‘Danish development policy’, ‘DANIDA’ and ‘foreign aid’. The search criteria were not restricted by publication dates due to understanding how and if the stream of thought about Danish development has changed over time being integral to the thesis. However, to ensure that the literature review presented the concepts within the current academic considerations, emphasis was put on newer articles with contemporary relevance.

DANISH DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Within the field of Danish development assistance two streams of academic debate arise regarding the drivers of Danish development assistance and its evolution. The first argues that fundamental drivers of Danish development assistance have not changed and remain altruistic with poverty reduction still being a prominent driver (Brunbech & Olesen, 2013; Elgström & Delputte, 2016; Jakobsen, 2019; Lancaster, 2007; Lawler, 2007; Olsen & Pedersen, 2010; Stokke, 2019). The second argues that Danish development assistance and the political approach has changed dramatically throughout this century (Browning, 2007; Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018, 2021; Kjær, 2022; Kjær, et al., 2022; Odén, 2011; Selbervik & Nygaard, 2006).

The first stream of thought frames Danish development assistance as altruistic, which is supported by Brunbech & Olsen (2013), Elgström & Delputte (2016), Jakobsen (2019), Lancaster (2007), Lawler (2007), Olesen & Pedersen (2010) & Stokke (2019) who make reference to the fact that Danish official development assistance (ODA) has not been under that UNs recommendation of 0.7 percent of Denmark’s gross national income (GNI) despite there being a reduction since its peak and that the core generosity remains. However, for the first time in 41 years Danish ODA was recorded at under 0.7 percent of Denmark’s GNI as in 2022 Danish ODA only reached 0.67 percent meaning that Denmark fell below the UNs recommendation – ejecting Denmark from the 0.7 percent “club” (Heldgaard, 2023). The social democrats development spokesman Jesper Petersen stated to Altinget that "It is purely technical conditions that meant we are not at the 0.7 percent in 2022"² with the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy Mr. Dan Jørgensen referring to it as "a

² Quote has been translated from Danish to English. <https://globalnyt.dk/det-skyldes-ikke-kun-teknik-men-ogsaa-politik-at-danmark-i-2022-roeg-ud-af-det-gode-selskab/>

mistake that must not happen again"³ (Heldgaard, 2023, para. 1). Despite the social democratic party positing that the drop is a result of a technical mistake and that it must not happen again Heldgaard (2023) argues that correlations can be drawn to a number of deliberate political decisions taken in Denmark. Additionally, that the “regulatory mechanisms” used by Denmark to ensure that Danish ODA does not exceed or fall below 0.7 percent but is exact, indicates the government’s reluctance to spend more than deemed necessary and appropriate by international organisations (Heldgaard, 2023). The government argues that the shortfall is due to the Danish GNI increasing exponentially in comparison to the expected growth and that predicted expenditure allocated to displaced persons from Ukraine was lower than expected (Heldgaard, 2023).

Brunbech & Olsen (2013) and Lancaster (2007) argue that despite the evidence of altruistic drivers Denmark has introduced new elements. Elgström & Delputte (2016), Lancaster (2007), Olesen & Pedersen (2010), and Stokke (2019) reference the emergence of the element of benefiting Danish interests and ensuring a “return percentage” i.e. the Danish business sector through bilateral programmes (Kjær, 2022). Despite the emergence of the focus on benefiting Danish interests in Danish development strategy and policy Elgström & Delputte (2016), Lancaster (2007), Olesen & Pedersen (2010), and Stokke (2019) still view Danish ODA as altruistic, but Olesen & Pedersen (2010) emphasises that selfless poverty reduction and discourse of altruism have decreased in popularity throughout the 2000s.

In juxtaposition Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov (2018; 2021), Kjær (2022), Kjær et al. (2022), Odén (2011), Browning (2007), Selbervik & Nygaard (2006) present a conflicting stream of thought on Danish ODA arguing that the focus of Danish ODA and its drivers have changed substantially over time. Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov (2018, 2021), Kjær (2022), and Kjær et al. (2022) highlight that poverty reduction has become less of a focus for Danish ODA referring to the declining amount of ODA African countries have received from Denmark in the past 30 years. Browning (2007) and Kjær et al. (2022) further comment that it indicates a decrease in solidarity with the Global South. Kjær (2022) refers to the linguistic changes in Danish development strategy, such as the 2017 ‘The World 2030’ which only uses the word ‘poverty’ 25 times versus Denmark’s development strategy from 2000 which mentioned

³ Quote has been translated from Danish to English. <https://globalnyt.dk/det-skyldes-ikke-kun-teknik-men-ogsaa-politik-at-danmark-i-2022-roeg-ud-af-det-gode-selskab/>

‘poverty’ 59 times. Additionally, Kjær (2022) emphasises that the concept of ‘poverty’ has been broadened in the context of Danish development strategy.

Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov (2018, 2021) draws focus to the fundamental changes to prioritisation of ODA, which they argue are apparent in ‘The World 2030’. The first being the increased focus on securitization with the shift to prevention of refugee influxes and irregular migration to Denmark and attempts to externalise refugee handling, which Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov (2018, 2021), Kjær (2022) and Kjær et al. (2022) interpret as moving away from humanitarian values. Kjær (2022) argues that these prioritisations are also evident in the latest Danish development strategy ‘The World We Share’ published in 2021.

Odén (2011) contributes to this stream of thought by highlighting that an increased amount of Danish ODA has been earmarked for national security due to the rise of securitization tactics being used by Denmark. In extension Selbervik & Nygaard (2006) presents the increased national focus by highlighting the Danish discourse of channelling more money to Danish welfare from Danish ODA funds.

As mentioned in the first stream Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov (2018, 2021), Selbervik & Nygaard (2006), and Kjær (2022) also refer to increased focus on benefiting Danish interests and the Danish private sector in Danish development strategy. Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov (2018, 2021), Selbervik & Nygaard (2006), and Kjær (2022) argue that the increased prioritisation of Danish industrial interests by “investing” in regions of interest indicates a fundamental shift in the drivers and prioritisation of Danish ODA. Whereas Elgström & Delputte (2016), Lancaster (2007), Olesen & Pedersen (2010), and Stokke (2019) argue in the first stream that it functions as an additional element and do not recognize it as a change to the fundamental drivers of Danish ODA.

Kjær et al. (2022) argues that in light of the changes to Danish development strategy Denmark has fallen behind other Nordic countries, which are often used as a comparison point for Danish politics, strategy and policy. Additionally, Kjær et al. (2022) argues that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) appears critical of Danish ODA discourse and implementation, referring to the recommendation Denmark received from OECD DAC in 2021 stating that Denmark needs to ensure the integrity of its ODA, how poverty reduction is supported by Danish ODA and reconcile the discrepancies between Denmark’s development goals and migration policies.

Browning (2007) and Selbervik & Nygaard (2006) reiterates Kjær et al. (2022) sentiment referring to Danish ODA being less exceptional than it once was.

FOREIGN AID

As previously stated, literature on foreign aid is extensive. Foreign aid, development aid and development cooperation are used somewhat interchangeably in some literature. Lancaster (2009) sums up foreign aid as “the transfer of concessional resources from government to another government, nongovernmental organization, or international organization, one purpose of which is to promote long-term beneficial change” (p. 799).

Apart from a relatively small number of cases foreign aid as a concept really began in the wake of the Second World War and since then the academic body of literature on foreign aid has grown exponentially (Lancaster, 2009; Wolf, Wang, & Warner, 2010).

There are several reasons for foreign aid being a subject of somewhat intense study as the concepts have been present in public discourse and political debates for decades. There was an early optimism towards the impacts of aid in the initial literature on the subject and since then the optimism of its impacts has been in decline which Tarp (2010) exemplifies by referencing the development of Meiers coverage of the subject from the 1960s to the 2000s. Tarp (2010) recounts that Meier dedicated 18 pages to foreign aid in his first “Leading Issues in Economic Development” in which the question was “How much aid?” whereas the question of the 6th edition had become “Why official assistance” and all but 5 years later subject of investigation was whether or not aid even works.

On the subject of foreign aid literature is often focused on effectiveness in which the effectiveness is investigated through economic development outcomes such as economic growth in recipient countries as well as the connection of aid and trade among donor and recipient countries (Wolf, Wang, & Warner, 2010). In 1995 Boone argued that foreign aid increases the size of governments, has little to no effect on economic growth and investment and that it does not significantly benefit the poor when measured according to human development indicators (Boone, 1995). 10 years later, Boone (2005) reiterated the lack of positive impact from foreign aid in response to Jeffrey Sachs book titled “The End of Poverty” with the comment: “Unfortunately for Sachs... the history of large aid flows is, to date, a major failure” (p.3). Boone (2005) continues to argue that it is possible to create a real impact on extreme poverty, but that aid needs to be carefully targeted and that foreign aid should be

allocated based on scientific evidence towards its effectiveness and ultimately delivered through well designed institutions (Boone, 2005). Boone's latter argument is somewhat supported by the findings of Burnside & Dollar (2000) arguing that the impact of aid on growth is dependent on the quality of economic policies and that aid is subject to diminishing returns.

Bjørnskov (2019) investigates types of foreign aid in light of a long series of studies that have deemed aid on social outcomes and growth ineffective or at least to have had no robust effects. In Bjørnskov's (2019) investigation three strands of literature that might provide explanations as to why aid is investigated and been found as ineffective. The first strand of literature argues positively towards the effect of aid but that the impact is so small that it can be difficult to measure and that this prevents identification of the effectiveness (Bjørnskov, 2019). The second strand of literature argues that aid has positive effects but that it comes with several negative indirect effects such as lack of competitiveness, inflation and price changes following aid inflows and investments in larger projects which may distort the local economy (Bjørnskov, 2019). The third strand, as highlighted by Bjørnskov (2019), is more recent. Within this body of literature, it is argued that aid is given with vastly different purposes and that the diversity makes identification of the effects near impossible.

Lancaster (2009) argues that among the scholars and practitioners debating the impact and effectiveness of foreign aid there are two groups. One group who argues for a link between the amount of aid and the amount of development spurred. In other words, if you put more in, you get more out. Lancaster (2009) has dubbed this group "resource fundamentalists". This position has been challenged by scholars who argue that the impact of aid on growth depends on the quality of economic policies and that the quality of these policies are not systematically affected by the quantity of aid (Burnside & Dollar, 2000; Collier & Dollar, 2002). The other group is predominantly sceptical of the impacts foreign aid has generated or can generate arguing that state involvement is an obstacle to economic development (if there is a functioning market present). Lancaster calls this group "market fundamentalists" and continues to argue that reality is significantly more complex than what the two groups represent (Lancaster, 2009). In a look back at 60 years of history with foreign aid Lancaster (2009) argues, that well-functioning markets and well-functioning states are important for development referencing capable states such as the South Korean, Taiwanese and Chinese states who have led their countries through significant development while leaving room for private actors to make decision which have supported investment and growth. Lancaster (2009) further highlights that

foreign aid does guarantee development⁴. There has been some tendencies in literature to look at poverty as a result of lacking resources, what some define as a “poverty trap” that the right amount of resources will overcome, but the problem is that this does not factor in human elements such as corruptions or political leaders who govern poorly or oppressively (Lancaster, 2009).

In response to the many scholars dismissing the effects of aid Lancaster (2009) highlights several rebuttals; assistance for health has helped reduce childhood mortality, aid has delivered anti-retroviral drugs to sufferers of HIV/AIDS, aid has helped in the eradication of smallpox and polio, aid for agricultural research has enabled agricultural production to increase its output significantly in Asia and Latin America.

Perhaps, the question is not whether foreign aid has had an impact, but rather what impact scholars want to measure and how they measure it. It is clear in the existing literature that there has been a predominant focus on the relation between foreign aid and growth, as it has been understood as a way to alleviate poverty (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008; Collier & Dollar, 2002). However, it is also evident that it can be difficult to measure any direct link and impact between foreign aid and economic growth. Does that mean foreign aid does not have an impact? No, as Lancaster listed, there have been several effects of aid, many of them positive, but perhaps it is necessary to measure more relations than just the linkages between foreign aid and development understood in terms of economic growth.

CONCEPTS

STRATEGIC SECTOR COOPERATION

Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) is a critical concept to understand as it is a central approach applied and implemented throughout the Danish development engagements by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and therefore plays a central role in the thesis. The SSC framework has three objectives - development, diplomacy and the Danish private sector.

The aim of the *development objective* is to contribute to inclusive development and sustainable growth in partners by aiding conducive framework conditions to facilitate achieving sustainable development goals.

⁴ In this case development is understood as a sustained increase in gross national income accompanied by a reduction in poverty.

The aim of the ***diplomatic objective*** is to facilitate the strengthening and expansion of relations between Denmark and partner countries.

The aim of the ***private sector objective*** is to facilitate the Danish private sector by aligning technical expertise and solutions to SDG challenges through improving framework conditions and local networks.

The SSC objectives are defined by the Danish governments Global Climate Action Strategy⁵ and Development Policy Strategy⁶ which focuses on contributing to the SDGs and targets set out in the Paris Agreement by supporting and promoting a socially just, green and sustainable transition (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a). The SSCs sector focuses are within fields in which Denmark demonstrates best practices and expertise in, such as agriculture, sustainability, water, environment, energy and food production (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a). The field of expertise is then matched to a partner country's needs and vision for development within their national plan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a).

Denmark currently has Strategic Sector Cooperations with 18 countries with 13 Danish authorities being the implementing party (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.; OECD, 2021). The partnership countries include Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, China, Myanmar, Vietnam and Turkey (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.).

Map of countries with Strategic Sector Cooperations



Figure 1 Countries with Strategic Sector Cooperations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.; OECD, 2021)

⁵ [Global Climate Action Strategy](#)

⁶ [Development Policy Strategy](#)

In addition to the objectives of the SSC framework it is essential to understand the fundamentals of the strategic approach and key aspects within the SSC framework on a practical level. There are seven key aspects that have been identified in the practical framework of a strategic sector cooperation – sector specific, holistic approach, partnership, local ownership, result-orientated, flexibility and adaptation.

Key aspects of Strategic Sector Cooperations

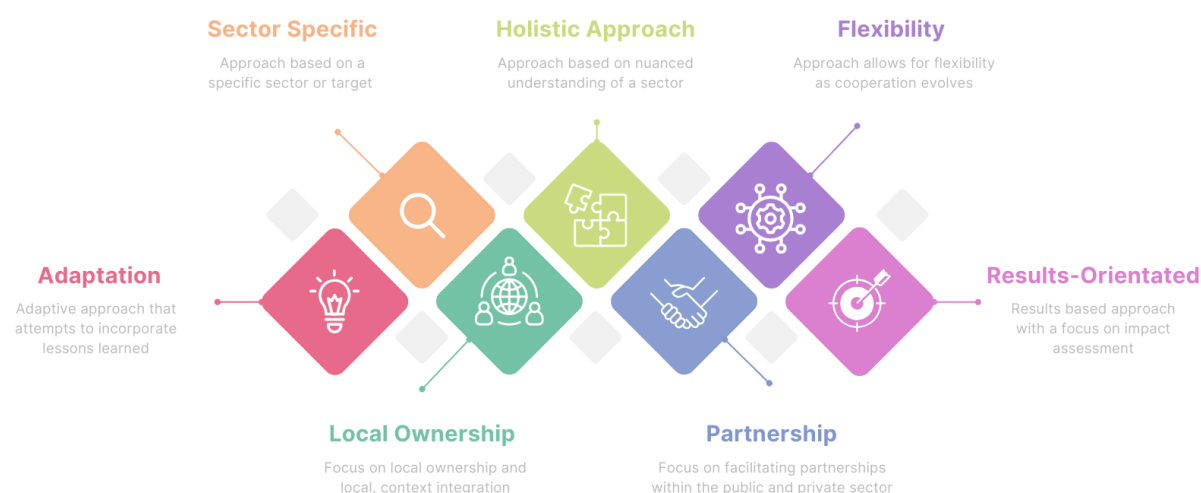


Figure 2 Fundamentals of Strategic Sector Cooperations

SECTOR SPECIFIC

As the name strategic sector cooperation suggests a key aspect of SSCs are that the cooperations between Denmark and partner countries are sector specific. With a focus on promoting sectors that Denmark has expertise in and utilising the competencies of Danish authorities, whilst aligning with the partner countries priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a).

HOLISTIC APPROACH

In contrast to the narrower sector focus of SSCs the aim is for the approach to be considered from a holistic standpoint and to embody the interconnections found throughout the different factors within the sector, e.g., environment, social and economic. A holistic approach is also considered in the level of the applicable national authority and how the focus of the SSC can be approached and intertwined with other related activities being attempted by the relevant authority on a broader level within the sector. The increasing involvement of the private sector

arguably bolsters the holistic approach as it offers an alternative perspective to assess the viability of activities within a given sector (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a).

PARTNERSHIP

Partnership plays a key role in SSCs both between the partner countries and the partnerships facilitated between public and private actors as well as relevant institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021b). Due to SSCs increased focus on the importance of private sector engagement fostering partnerships that bridge the gap between public and private actors is essential to the cooperations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a). However, ensuring an equitable and harmonious partnership between partner countries is also an essential aspect as it facilitates a team approach from those working with the cooperation on a practical level (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a)

LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Local ownership is an important aspect of SSCs as the overarching Framework Agreements are based on the partner countries' expressed priorities and national vision or plan in relation to specific sectors focusing on sustainable development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a). Therefore, the Danish authority's role is to contribute with best practices and expertise to facilitate a conducive framework for progress to be made. Furthermore, under the SSC Guidelines the partner country must commit to having ownership of achieving the targets with support from the Danish authority partner (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a).

RESULT-ORIENTATED

SSC generally places a strong emphasis on results and impact assessment. This is consistent with the broader shift towards focusing on outcomes rather than inputs or individual activities. In SSC the result orientation is highlighted through the description of outcomes under each respective cooperation which must reflect the three core outcomes of the "Global Results Framework":

1. Through the SSC the partner country's capacity to develop, implement and enforce policies and conducive framework conditions for green transition has been strengthened.

2. Through the SSC the partner country has increased its ambitions on climate and green transition.
3. Through the SSC the Danish private sector has gotten an enhanced role in identifying sustainable development solutions and the opportunities for promotion of green financial investments has been strengthened.

Under the SSC there will normally be a Danish partner authority which could be the Danish Energy Agency or the Danish Environmental Protection Agency. Through the partnerships, the Danish partner authorities have to report progress according to the Global Results Framework and additional targets based on the phase of the SSC to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a).

FLEXIBILITY

Despite the narrow sector focus, the broad mandate of contributing to an SDG within the sector offers the flexibility for the cooperation to evolve as needed so the SSC is not locked in by a plan that might not be performing or the partner country's immediate challenge changes. Furthermore, it offers the flexibility to add different authorities in Denmark or the partner country to ensure the cooperation is as effective as possible⁷. The flexibility is evident in being able to adjust programme documents and output as the programme progresses although the changes are subject to approval of the Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (GDK) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ADAPTION

The newest SSC Guiding Principles are based on key lessons learned from the first five years of SSCs and the focus of adaptive learning is repeated in the adaptive management implemented in SSCs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a). The adaptive management approach promotes a learning and adaptive approach based on lessons learned from ongoing projects, which is continually incorporated into the framework of the cooperation to ensure that the activities are as effective as possible (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021a).

⁷ As observed during my professional experience at the Danish Embassy in South Africa and China

JUST TRANSITION

This section is intended to provide an understanding of just transition as a concept in the context of sustainable development and green transition which is important to understand how it is integrated in the Danish development approach.

In recent years, various Danish development cooperations have attempted to address sustainability with reference to the 17 SDGs and green transition where just transition could be argued to be a sub-category. To understand the concept of just transitions it is important to understand that transition in this case refers to the broader green transition which is an important element of the sustainable development agenda.

The UNs Committee for Development Policy broadly describes the just transition as a transition in which “no one is left behind or pushed behind in the transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies” (United Nations, 2023b, p. 1). In a call to encourage countries to develop just transition approaches, through inclusive dialogue, the committee additionally states that “the concept of a just transition, while arising from concerns for justice at the local and national levels, cannot be separated from the broader issues of global climate justice and common but differentiated responsibilities.”. (United Nations, 2023b, p. 1)⁸. These descriptions of the just transition merely confirm how broad of an umbrella the concept is. The reason for the concept having gained the traction and attention it has, is largely a result of the Paris Agreement of 2015 which includes a statement of the parties (countries) agreeing to take into account “the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and creation of decent work and quality jobs” while noting the importance of “climate justice” (UNFCCC, 2015, s. 4). As the concept has been getting increasing attention, it has also been understood from a variety of academic disciplines. Thus, in environmental sciences the main justices of a just transition would refer to climate, energy and environmental justice (Heffron & McCauley, 2018) to some extent lacking the social dimensions in which just transitions are understood as a labour-oriented concept, governance strategies or theoretical parts of socio-technical transition (Wang & Lo, 2021). In other words, literature on just transition draws on theoretical and empirical insights from a plethora of disciplines, but it continues to contain certain gaps and the different ‘justice’ elements are often looked at individually instead of a more holistic

⁸ The quote is from the excerpt from the Committee for Development Policy, Report on the 25th sessions which is a subsidiary advisory board to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

approach which can distort the just transition literature (Heffron, 2021; Wang & Lo, 2021). One way to begin understanding the concept from a holistic perspective is to start by understanding transitions and why we are talking about them.

First, it is important to recognise that global challenges such as resource depletion, loss of biodiversity and climate change requires transitions of deep structural changes encompassing industry, policy makers and civil society (Geels, Hekkert, & Jacobsson, 2008) and that these transitions are complex processes of societal change deemed necessary to address grand societal challenges (Avelino, Grin, Pel, & Jhagroe, 2016; Geels, 2011). As transitions are processes of societal change involving and affecting multiple actors, transitions simultaneously pose a threat to existing dynamics and structures while presenting an opportunity for radical, systemic and accelerated change (Loorbach, Frantzeskaki, & Avelino, 2017). The green transition and particularly energy transitions are considered a crucial enabler of sustainable development (United Nations, 2021). Today, we have the benefit of past experiences with transitions and not least coal transitions, which offer valuable insights to the implications of the green transitions (Caldecott, Sartor, & Spencer, 2017).

For the context of this thesis, it is important to note, that most of the aforementioned experiences with coal transitions have taken place in the Global North in areas with monolithic economies often dependent on their coal and production industries. In these cases, the experience of coal transitions have shown that shutting down the fossil industries had a direct impact on those working in fossil and production industries in the form of severe unemployment (Bridle, Kitson, Duan, Sanchez, & Merrill, 2017; Caldecott, Sartor, & Spencer, 2017). It is also important to note, that while some of these cases on coal transitions show a transition to other energy sources, these have not necessarily been renewable or clean energy sources. Similarly, economic globalisation and international trade throughout the period in which these areas went through their transitions has enabled a transfer of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and pollutants from the Global North to the Global South (Chen & Li, 2021). While global value chains by some are seen as an important part of fostering development and economic growth in developing countries (Wang, He, & Song, 2021) relocation of production and thereby the labour- and pollution intensive activities along the global value chain can cause asymmetry between the economic gains and the environmental losses experienced in developing countries, which in turn becomes problematic for ensuring sustainable development (Hu, Jiao, Tang, Han, & Sun, 2021).

Keeping in mind that several of the negative consequences to transitions can be found within a socio-economic sphere, an understanding of just transition rooted in social sciences will predominantly be used throughout this thesis. Within social sciences, just transition is often understood as an approach addressing the linkages between development, energy transitions and unemployment (Rosemberg, 2010). The Danish MFA in their Global Climate Action Strategy “A Green and Sustainable World”, appear to apply a similar perspective by stating that they “will work for a socially just green transition that creates green skilled jobs and avoids increasing inequality”. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023, p. 4) The social science perspective on just transition has been developed and influenced by organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in attempts of ensuring that elements such as social inclusion and challenges of growing inequality are not forgotten in the work with grand challenges such as climate change. In 2010 a report sponsored by ILO, Rosemberg (2010) noted, that “job losses are not an automatic consequence of climate policies, but the consequence of a lack of investment, social policies and anticipation” (p.134). From this perspective, one could understand the concept based of ILOs vision of the just transition as:

“(…) a systematic and whole of economy approach to sustainability. It includes measures to reduce the impact of job losses and industry phase-out on workers and communities, and measures to produce new, green and decent jobs, sectors and healthy communities. It aims to address environmental, social and economic issues together” (Smith, 2017, pp. 3-4).

While the understanding of just transition throughout this project will predominantly have its roots in social science and thereby the “social justice” sphere of transition it is done with an attempt at a holistic approach to just transition. In effect, this means understanding that a just transition covers several dimensions such as the social, environmental and economic aspects known from the concept of sustainability, also referenced in the ILO description. This is done in recognition of some of the aforementioned criticisms towards distorted perspectives on the concept found in current literature.

THEORY

NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

New institutionalism is an approach in political and social science, which provides a framework to identify the practices, norms and rules that contribute to patterns of behaviours within

policymaking and politics in a specific institution (Cairney, 2012). The approach considers the formal and informal rules prevalent within the institution. Formal rules are readily available in the form of constitutions, government policies, standard operating procedures and etc – tangible rules allowing for easier comparison (Cairney, 2012). Whereas informal rules exist in the behavioural norms of the institution and those within the institution, which results in the informal rules being more difficult to identify, define and subsequently study (Cairney, 2012).

New institutionalism encompasses four main streams - rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and discursive institutionalism. Presumably, logic would dictate that the four new institutionalism streams would have fundamental similarities, yet the four new institutionalism streams are quite ambiguous. Therefore, in the process of attempting to understand the streams it is essential to acknowledge that new institutionalism does not “constitute a unified body of thought” as put by Hall & Taylor (1996) (p.936). In addition to the four main streams within new institutionalism there are many other variants, such as normative, empirical, feminist and etc, however the introduction to new institutionalism in this thesis will focus on the aforementioned core streams.

Rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism were the main new institutionalism streams until the formulation of discursive institutionalism. Arguably, the temporal separation in the establishment of the streams becomes evident in the streams approach to change with rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalisms stance being static in nature and particularly resistant to institutional change (Cairney, 2012; Schmidt, 2010). Whereas discursive institutionalism has dynamic tendencies to navigating institutional change (Schmidt, 2010).

Within new institutionalism there is much debate surrounding what is considered an “institution” and the categorisation of formal, semi-formal or informal institutions, however due to the scope of this thesis the debate of what is considered an institution is not of importance as the subject of analysis is the Danish government and its development strategy and tools (Cairney, 2012). Therefore, the subject of analysis can easily be categorised as a formal institution due to it being a traditional government structure, supported by March and Olsen (1984) classification of major actors in political systems as formal institutions (Newton & Van Deth, 2010).

Due to the ambiguities of rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and discursive institutionalism certain new institutionalism scholars view the different streams as a spectrum with the potential applicability of a multi-stream approach, Figure 3 offers an insightful overview of new institutionalism scholars and their stance within the four streams.

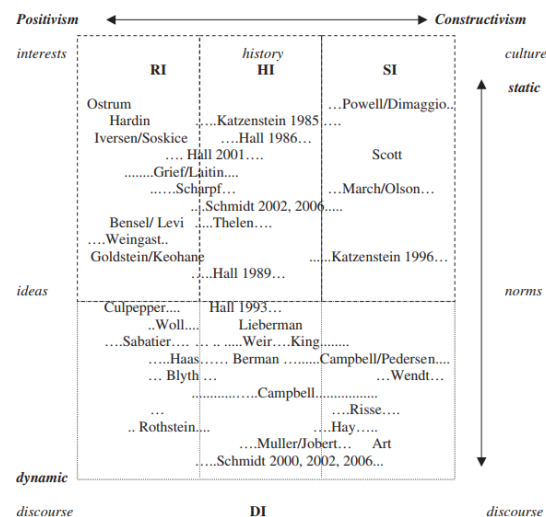


Figure 3 Scholars' use of the four new institutionalisms: rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2010, p. 20)

The following section provides a brief introduction to the four different streams touching on their distinctive characteristics within the field of political and social science in addition to considering their analytical strengths and weaknesses. Table 1 presents a brief overview of rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and discursive institutionalism highlighting key aspects of the isms for easy comparison in conjunction with the section below.

	Rational choice institutionalism	Historical institutionalism	Sociological institutionalism	Discursive institutionalism
Object of explanation	Behavior of rational actors	Structures and practices	Norms and culture of social agents	Ideas and discourse of sentient agents
Logic of explanation	Calculation	Path-dependency	Appropriateness	Communication
Definition of institutions	Incentive structures	Macro-historical structures and regularities	Cultural norms and frames	Meaning structures and constructs
Approach to change	Static – continuity through fixed preferences, stable institutions	Static – continuity through path dependency interrupted by critical junctures	Static – continuity through cultural norms and rules	Dynamic – change (and continuity) through ideas and discursive interaction
Explanation of change	Exogenous shock	Exogenous shock	Exogenous shock	Endogenous process through background ideational and foreground discursive abilities
Recent innovations to explain change	Endogenous ascription of interest shifts through RI political coalitions or HI self-reinforcing or self-undermining processes	Endogenous description of incremental change through layering, drift, conversion	Endogenous construction (merge with DI)	Endogenous construction through reframing, recasting collective memories and narratives through epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions, communicative action, deliberative democracy

Table 1 Overview of the four new institutionalisms (Schmidt, 2010, p. 5)

RATIONAL CHOICE INSTITUTIONALISM

Rational choice institutionalism implements methodological individualism and the ‘calculus approach’ to investigate the incentive nature of structures by examining the decisions of individuals under specific conditions and the proportion of socio-political outcomes as a result of the individuals’ preferences (Cairney, 2012). Rational choice institutionalism argues that individuals know that there are consequences and therefore assume the rationality of individuals and that they consider which actions will result in the most preferable payoff for themselves under a particular set of conditions (Cairney, 2012). This is why the concept of institutions is essential to rational choice institutionalism as it provides the context to analyse the decisions of individuals (Cairney, 2012). The establishment of institutional rules and structure subsequently result in the creation of a stable point which Cairney (2012) argues results in there being “no incentive to divert from their patterns of behaviour”, resulting in stable institutions (p. 80). Based on rational choice institutionalisms tenets the political outcomes are a result of the collective actions of individuals and their interactions (Cairney, 2012).

Despite rational choice institutionalism not following historical institutionalism stream of thought regarding patterns and path dependency, within the academic debate of rational choice institutionalism it is evident that the institutional structures enable the production of patterned behaviour and therefore it can be difficult to determine if the outcomes are a result of individuals preferences or the institutions (Riker, 1980).

SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONALISM

Sociological institutionalism emerged predominantly out of sociology and organisational studies as a challenge to the rational choice strand of thought but still attempts to investigate and clarify the role of institutions in political outcomes (von Billerbeck, 2020). Sociological institutionalism considers individuals as social agents and argues that the institutions “rules of appropriateness” are “transmitted through socialization” as opposed to rational choice institutionalism’s argument of behaviour being based on the logic of expected consequences (March & Olsen, 1984, p. 739; von Billerbeck, 2020).

The basis of “logic appropriateness” argues that the role of institutions set the “norms, cognitive frames, scripts, and meaning systems that guide human action” creating “culturally specific practices” which are “followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected and legitimate” (March & Olsen, 1984, p. 739; Schmidt, 2010, p. 13). Furthermore, sociological institutionalism argues that social institutional environment causes individuals to internalise the norms associated with their roles, which in turn reinforces the rules of the institution (von Billerbeck, 2020). This results in the institution constituting what actions are considered legitimate, appropriate and possible – essentially providing individuals with a script (von Billerbeck, 2020). Additionally, the individual seeks legitimacy from peers within the institution based on what has been deemed appropriate, which results in inefficiency as individuals are limited to the social norms and what is conceivable and feasible within the institution (von Billerbeck, 2020). This aspect can result in resistance to potential institutional changes as the currently accepted institutional norms and rules are intertwined with the self-image of individuals in the institution (von Billerbeck, 2020).

There are three main issues that should be considered when analysing through the lens of sociological institutionalism. Due to the institutional “rules” being transmitted through socialisation they are informal in nature which leaves room for individuals to interpret the informal rules (Cairney, 2012). The second issue is that the willingness of individuals to follow the rules will differ depending on the person (Cairney, 2012). Lastly, the issue of contradictory rules due to exposure to multiple institutions, which can prevent the individual from forging the needed relationship to the institution (Cairney, 2012).

DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM

Discursive institutionalism is the newest of the main streams of new institutionalism and offers a dynamic lens to institutionalism by considering the role of discourse and ideas in politics in comparison to the static nature of the older three streams of institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008). Schmidt (2008) argues that there are four key tenants to discursive institutionalism. The first is that it “takes ideas and discourse seriously” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 304). However, the usage of discourse and definition of ideas varies greatly within the stream of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008). Second, discursive institutionalism like the other streams of new institutionalism uses institutions as context to set a background for the ideas and discourses (Schmidt, 2008). Thirdly, discursive institutionalism posits that discourse follows a “logic of communication while ideas are put into “meaning context” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 304). The last tenant is that the lens of discursive institutionalism “take[s] a more dynamic view of change”, in which they posit that ideas and discourse can overcome the obstacles prevalent in the static lenses of rational choice, historical and sociological institutionalism, which argue that the obstacles are “insurmountable” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 304).

In contradiction to the three other main streams of new institutionalism discursive institutionalism considers “ideational constructs and structures” in individuals as institutions and therefore posits that they are not rigid in nature as ideas are “constantly in flux, being reconsidered and redefined” by individuals (Béland & Cox, 2010, p. 4; Schmidt, 2010, p. 12). Therefore, individuals are capable of creating “structures (of thinking and acting) that constrain action and as constructs (of thinking and acting) created and changed by those actors” (Schmidt, 2010, p. 14).

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM

Historical institutionalism is a set of distinct analytical concepts that are used to analyse sets of substantive themes. Historical institutionalism places great emphasis on temporality as it considers sequence and timing to contribute to “unpredictability (outcomes may vary greatly), inflexibility (the more time passes, the more difficult it is to reverse course), nonergodicity (chance events may have lasting effects), and inefficiencies (forgone alternatives may have been more efficient)” (Fioretos, 2011, p. 371). These assertions are not new nor necessarily controversial; however, historical institutionalism offers a distinct approach to facilitate considering the concepts within academic debate (Fioretos, 2011). Cairney (2012) presents

critical juncture, historical contingency, and path dependency as key concepts within historical institutionalism.

A critical juncture refers to the point in time that decisions or events result in instituting major changes within an institution (Cairney, 2012). The timing of changes to an institution are of great analytical importance as it can indicate the order of events that could potentially set the institution on the specific path (Cairney, 2012). Especially as historical institutionalism argues that institutions are sensitive to initial conditions as different sets of initial conditions set an institution's development on a specific path (Cairney, 2012).

Historical contingency refers to the extent that past actions, decisions and events have contributed to current states of an institution and its practices (Cairney, 2012). The concept of historical contingency links to March and Olsen's term historical efficiency. Historical institutionalism's perspective of historical efficiency differs from rational choice institutionalism as historical institutionalism argues that the current position of an institution is owed to the legacy of the choices that formed the institution and therefore view reproducing the patterns as effective, which in theory prevents the adaptation of patterns that could potentially lead to radical change linking to the concepts of inflexibility, inefficiencies, nonergodicity, and path dependency (Fioretos, 2011).

Path dependency refers to the established paths or structures that do not experience substantial change making institutional changes less likely to occur (Fioretos, 2011; Schmidt, 2010). This is exacerbated by the argument that the "cost" of choosing a different path increases due to the investment in the established path, which supposedly will produce increased returns over time (Cairney, 2012). Earlier scholarly work regarding historical institutionalism that included the concept of path dependency were criticised for having a deterministic understanding of institutional development, yet now it is generally considered a symbiotic part of historical institutionalism as it accounts for the micro level mechanisms which can contribute to or undermine path-dependent trajectories (Fioretos, 2011). The concept of path dependency and linkage to new institutionalism will be addressed further in the path dependency section.

PATH DEPENDENCY

Path dependency links to the idea that "history matters" in the field of historical institutionalism, therefore the concept of path dependency is generally included in academic literature pertaining to historical institutionalism as it is often argued that where

institutionalism is applicable so is path dependency. (Kickert & Van der Mee, 2011). Path dependency is rooted in “process, sequence and temporality” as following the path of events which are inherently linked leads to a set outcome and potentially its explanation (Kickert & Van der Mee, 2011, p. 476).

However, there are criticisms that the notion is too vague and therefore some scholars have argued for more specific usage and stricter definition of the concept with Mahoney arguing for stricter methodology (Kickert & Van der Mee, 2011).

Despite path dependency being most prominent in historical institutionalism it is also present in the sociological stream of thought, yet from the perspective that institutions begin with societies which are a sum of collective outcomes determined by individuals, which determine the path of the institution culminating in socially driven path dependency (Thelen, 1999).

CRITICAL JUNCTURES

The concept of critical junctures is arguable just as essential to historical institutionalism as path dependency as it is used to isolate and highlight the ruptures to an institution’s equilibrium. The occurrence of radical critical junctures results in a phase of institutional flux that allows more dramatic change to occur (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Furthermore, within the theory of historical institutionalism junctures are considered ‘critical’ because it is argued that they establish the starting point for an institution’s path (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). The importance of critical junctures is also exacerbated by the idea that it is very difficult to implement change or new trajectories within an institution (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

However, Kickert & Van der Mee (2011) presents the approach that many historical institutionalists take that the accumulation of gradual small changes can also result in critical junctures once it surpasses a threshold and therefore not only abrupt radical changes should be viewed as “critical junctures” (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

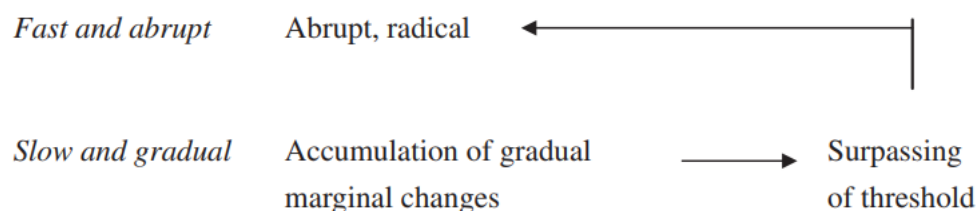


Figure 4 Paths to critical junctures (Kickert & Van der Mee, 2011, p. 479)

Further arguing that it is not helpful to the study of institutional change that periods of equilibrium can only be “punctured” by radical external shock and that the hypothesis of changes due to accumulation is based on *cumulation* of small changes or growth, the *casual chains* of small changes have a domino effect and eventually reaching a *threshold* (Kickert & Van der Mee, 2011). However, Capoccia & Kelemen (2007) approach and methodology posit that the critical juncture should be relative to the duration of the path-dependent initiated by the juncture. Supposedly, Capoccia & Kelemen’s opinion of how long a critical juncture or build up to one should in theory provide a useable approach, however it there is still much room for interpretation of what should be classified as “relative” instead of for example, applying an approach based on outcome – change (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A comparative analysis approach will be used throughout the thesis to compare former development strategies and tools to Strategic Sector Cooperations and current strategies. The analysis will focus on policy development and the content of the strategies and tools to investigate the potential similarities and fundamental differences.

For this project, a mixed-methods approach is considered. The project will primarily rely on a qualitative approach which will include expert interviews with personnel from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs directly engaged with the implementation of the Danish approach to development assistance. The project naturally includes an element of document analysis, where secondary and tertiary documents will be used for the comparative analysis. While primarily relying on a qualitative approach for the comparative analysis, the qualitative method will be supported by quantitative data with potentially relevant statistics on development and other indicators from relevant organisations.

METHODS

This section explains the methodological approaches used throughout the thesis. As previously stated, this thesis will predominantly employ a qualitative approach however quantitative methodology might be incorporated throughout the analysis in support of the qualitative approach. The methods are used in combination with theory and concepts that may offer a

theoretical understanding applicable to interpreting how Denmark's development cooperation strategies have evolved or why it may not have evolved to the extent some scholars believe.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Comparison is considered a fundamental tool of analysis as it enables researchers to bring focus on suggestive similarities or contrasts among cases or subjects of study, which in turn can contribute to testing and discovering new hypotheses and supplement theory building (Collier D. , 1993). There are varieties to comparative analysis as an approach. Generally, variations of comparative analysis form according to (i) whether the comparison aim to explain differences or similarities and (ii) what assumptions may have been made about underlying causal patterns (Pickvance, 2001).

In order to answer the research questions the analysis in this thesis is comparative in nature. This is evident through the analysis where possible similarities or differences among Danish development strategies are examined in order to understand how the Danish approach to development cooperation may have developed through the years. Applying the comparative analysis may also support the development of new hypotheses as to why the development approach has evolved among certain paths, or why it has not. In the least, it is clear from the literature review and historical analysis, that there are two distinct positions as to whether or not the development approach can even be considered to have evolved at any significant rate.

CASE STUDY

While a key element of the research design is the comparative analysis to compare current and former development strategies and tools for development cooperation applied by Denmark, it will be supported by a case study investigating examples of how strategic sector cooperations are implemented. Case studies generally refer to detailed analysis of one or multiple cases where the basic case study would often be intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2012). In other words, a single case study might offer an opportunity to uncover many aspects of one case whereas a multiple case study could offer insights to fewer aspects of the given cases but from a larger sample size.

For this thesis, a case study is chosen as it facilitates in-depth investigation of a given subject-matter and for complementing, exploring or developing theory (Ridder, 2017). A case in itself can be a plethora of objectives of study such as organisations, locations, events or communities

and case studies are often linked with qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). As case studies offer an opportunity to further examine a given phenomenon, the purpose of the case study in this thesis is to support the predominantly qualitative analysis based on interview and document analysis by allowing for further exploration and interpretation.

CASE JUSTIFICATION

This thesis limits itself to the study of a single case. To investigate how current Danish development cooperation is implemented and how SSCs are implemented by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs the case study will be of the Danish development activities in China.

Denmark has development activities in many countries, but China is selected as the case of study for a number of reasons. First, Denmark has 6 ongoing strategic sector cooperations in China covering the food and agriculture, water and environment, energy, health, and maritime sectors. Second, as the historical analysis has shown, there has previously been criticism towards the focus of certain Danish bilateral development cooperations including how they are focused and in what type of countries said cooperations take place as well as a general lack of poverty orientation. Third, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Beijing was selected as a so-called “green front-line mission” following a Danish government decision from 2019 in which the government declared that Denmark’s foreign, trade and development strategy must be governed by climate and sustainability (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2023). An introduction to the case will be presented later in the thesis.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The analysis is supported by data collected through a semi-structured interview with a sector counsellor of the Danish embassy in Beijing. The semi-structured interview is considered a common data collection methodology in qualitative research (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

The semi-structured interview is guided by standardised questions but at its core it could be described as an organised conversation that allows for new and additional information to guide the interview process (Ahlin, 2019). Applying semi-structured interviews can help to facilitate the collection of viewpoints from different stakeholders such as experts or practitioners within a given field or organisation. It is however important to be aware that the quality of the data

collected through the interview, the trustworthiness and the usability greatly depend on the supporting data collection procedures (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

Upon completion of the interview, the collected data will be analysed to identify themes, possible similarities and differences on how a strategic sector cooperation is implemented for the country on the receiving end of the development cooperation. The interview will also be used to understand how the concept of just transition may or may not be integrated in the SSCs.

INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

In this project, the interview respondent has requested to remain anonymous. The respondent is a Sector Counsellor at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Beijing and was chosen as an interviewee based on their position at the frontline of Danish development cooperation at one of Denmark's green embassies. The interviewee was presented with the research question, premise and plan before the interview and has consented to the interview being recorded and used as data for the project. The interview was conducted on the 12th of October 2023 in Beijing, China. The interview took place in a casual setting, so it functioned as more of a conversation guided by question and lasted for roughly one hour and ten minutes. The interviewee answered 18 questions that had been prepared in advance in addition to the natural follow up to the interviewee's answers. The interviewee provided insight into the workings of the structure at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Beijing, Danish-Chinese relations, implementation of the SSC framework in China, the private sector dynamic, classification of China as a developing country and the potential of contributing to SDGs and a just transition.

TRIANGULATION

In a qualitative study, it is important to consider and ensure the validity and reliability of the findings in the project. Ensuring the presence of the four criteria of trustworthiness is one of the ways in which one can adapt validity and reliability to the findings. The four criteria of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and their presence can be facilitated through triangulation (Bryman, 2012). Triangulation is a methodological approach through which multiple theoretical perspectives, concepts, sources of data and methodologies are employed so that all findings may be cross-checked (Bryman, 2012). Triangulation is often utilised in case-study based projects as it is considered beneficial to the development of an in-depth case description (Ridder, 2017).

In this thesis, triangulation is in practice applied for the description of the selected case and throughout the analysis by cross-referencing multiple sources of empirical data and analysis of primary, secondary and tertiary data. Primary data sources refer to first-hand accounts of a given topic or situation. In this project, primary data is collected through an expert interview supported by official government strategies and laws whereas secondary data in this project refer to the use of data sets, journal articles, reports and meeting minutes. The tertiary sources predominantly refer to the use of textbooks and encyclopaedias.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Secondary research, often referred to as desk research, is also applied throughout the project. At its core, the methodology consists of compiling and summarising secondary data collected by others (Stewart, 1993). Academic articles, official government reports, research and books are used throughout the project both for the analysis of Danish development cooperation, strategies, relevant theories and concepts. As secondary research can be and is often in conjunction with primary research (Stewart, 1993), the role of the secondary research in this project is also largely to support the use of the semi-structured interview approach.

OBSERVATION

Throughout the thesis and in the preparation of the study observation is applied as a supplementary method. The ethnography observer role has been used and the observations have been made over an extended period of time in natural settings as a participative observer. Due to my experience as an intern and active member at the SSC department at the Danish Embassy in Pretoria and my current function at the Danish Embassy in Beijing I have been able to engage in dialogue with sector counsellors and personnel at the forefront of Danish development cooperation.

It is important to recognise that there can be issues of validity and reliability when using observation as methodology, not least in a circumstance of a cross cultural workplace dynamic where participants of the observed phenomena might alter their behaviour and cultural differences might result in different interpretations of given situation or contexts (Guthrie, 2010).

LIMITATIONS

In research, and perhaps particularly in research of this nature, it is essential to reflect critically on methodological choices and findings throughout the study. As this is predominantly qualitative study it is also important to consider the limitations of such a study.

For this thesis I have decided to do a single case study, as it allows for more in-depth analysis of the chosen case. Alternatively, I could have conducted a multiple case study which would have given more perspectives towards the implementation of Denmark's current development strategy through the lens of the strategic sector cooperations.

Throughout the thesis I rely on statistical and financial data from numerous sources. In some cases, I have been able to access data from organisations such as the World Bank which has enabled me to investigate it further on my own. However, even in these cases, the data remain secondary having been collected by others and to some extent analysed by others. Essentially, that means I am relying on data collected and analysed by other academics which should be considered in regard to the conclusion I can draw at the end of this thesis. As I have been able to dive into the history of Danish foreign aid and development cooperation I have tried to access as much coherent data as possible, however, there are some data and sources referred to by scholars such as Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen (2008) which I have not been able access and investigate.

Theory and streams of thought within new institutionalism is an important element of my thesis and its analysis. Essentially one could argue that the theory affects how I am able to navigate and understand the empirical data found. While the theory and concepts within new institutionalism might serve to provide an explanation or at least a perspective on why certain developments of Danish development strategy has occurred, there are also elements of the analysis where it is necessary to supplement the theory of new institutionalism. I have elected to do this by providing an understanding and interpretation of concepts such as just transition, and sustainability rooted in academic literature. Understanding sustainability is important in the context of Denmark's more recent development strategies as well as the 17 SDGs by the UN. The SDGs are also an important part of the strategic sector cooperations as each SSC aims to address a specific SDG.

For this thesis my analysis is supplemented with primary data collected through a semi-structured expert interview. In this context it is also important to critically reflect upon the limitations of the interview and possible limitations of the respondent. One could argue that there is a risk of an interviewee having adopted the organisational culture of the persons workplace or that they might be limited in what they can say due to their position. For example, I asked my interview respondent how poverty is addressed through their cooperation, when the respondent explained that traditional poverty was not addressed, I followed up by asking whether the respondent found it important which the respondent was somewhat hesitant to answer. Such possible limitations must also be considered in relation to the conclusions drawn in the project.

HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN DENMARK

UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT

Development as a concept has been a major theme in academic discourse since the Second World War, it has played and continues to play a major role in international relations. The term “development” can be understood in a number of ways depending on the use and context. The word itself has a dynamic connotation as it implies or refers to progress, processes of change, growth or evolution (Midgley, 2014). Within the context of development assistance or foreign aid, the term development was originally used to describe processes of societal change, although primarily in the context of economic modernisation of developing countries. Within this sphere of understanding, development would usually refer to an increase in national income with an accompanying reduction in poverty. From this perspective, challenges of development are essentially understood as a lack of resources or a sort of poverty trap that the right number of resources can overcome (Lancaster, 2009). This rather narrow approach to development had a clear focus on economic growth which has since developed towards a broader understanding; namely that development processes encompass social, political, cultural, gender and environmental dimensions (Midgley, 2014).

Bilateral, multilateral or international efforts to promote and further development in given recipient countries is often referred to as development assistance, development cooperation or foreign aid. These different terminologies could be encompassed by the term “social development” and has been regularly used in academia for at least half a century (Midgley,

2014). Social referring to communities or societies and development referring to progress or growth. While scholars of different academic backgrounds often refer to the term in different ways, social development is commonly associated with the aforementioned dimensions of development and community-based development or humanitarian projects in developing countries such as establishing microenterprises, construction of schools or healthcare clinics, provision of safe drinking water, poverty reduction and combating malnutrition. Broadly, this understanding of social development also reflects the Millenium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2000 (Midgley, 2014) and the more recent 17 SDGs adopted by the UN in September 2015 (United Nations, 2023a). Tracing the history of development or the broader definition of social development will show that the first social development programmes were established in the Global South and at times reflected colonial officials being engaged with “raising the standards of living” and economic growth (Midgley, 2014).

As there are several different approaches to understanding development based on academic, theoretical and professional backgrounds this thesis recognises development as processes of change and a multidimensional concept encompassing a social, political, cultural, environmental and cultural dimension.

To further the understanding of Danish approaches to development assistance in the context of the research question, the Danish experience with development assistance will be further examined. It is important to recognise the nuances of humanitarian aid and disaster relief where one often sees a current crisis addressed, and the more long-term development assistance or “cooperation” as it is more frequently called in the 21st century.

ESTABLISHING A TIMELINE

This section will introduce the history of development assistance in Denmark to establish historical context and a foundation and timeline to base the analysis on.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FROM 1945 TO 1962

In recent history, Denmark has marked its place in international development assistance history with the emergence of Danish development policy, strategy and politics. Denmark is recognised, at least in relative terms, as one of the most generous development aid donors (Brunbech P. Y., 2014). We can trace the start of Danish development assistance to 1945 with the establishment of the United Nations (UN) and development assistance becoming a central

topic in Danish politics, which cumulated in Denmark being recognised as one of the leading donors to development assistance by the 1990s based on the 0,7% target of GNI given as Official Development Assistance (ODA). By the mid-1990s Denmark's net ODA had exceeded 1,0 % of GNI and per the OECD Denmark had become the most generous donor of the countries on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (OECD, DAC, 2003). The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs also highlights that Danish development engagements had been a core element of Denmark's relation to the surrounding World since the Second World War (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023).

The Danish approach to development assistance started in the years following the Second World War (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008), which was a time of radical change and expansion of the international system as seen through the founding of the United Nations in 1945 followed by other UN organisations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other multilateral organisations such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and other institutions (Eggel & Galvin, 2020). The UN was created at the end of the Second World War at a time where nations were in ruins and wanting for peace. In 1950 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established and in 1954 it won the Nobel Peace Prize (United Nations, 2023c). In its beginning, Danish development assistance was almost exclusively channelled through multilateral organisations and particularly the UN system (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023). From 1945-1953 the Danish Government established a fund called SIH⁹, roughly translated to council for cooperation on international aid, and provided approximately DKK 90 million for humanitarian aid focused on food, agriculture and health primarily in the neighbouring countries which included the Netherlands and Schleswig-Holstein in Germany (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008).

Comprehensive national and international aid programmes were developed through the UN and World Bank organisations throughout the 1950s. The objective of these programmes was primarily to foster mutual economic growth through technical and economic assistance which in practice meant sharing of expertise and knowledge, goods and machinery as well as capital through loans or direct investments (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). This was fully in alignment with the UN Charter of 1945 in which article 55 states that the UN shall

⁹ In Danish: Samarbejdsudvalg for internationalt hjælpearbejde

promote “Higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development” (United Nations, 1945). With the UNs establishment of the regular programme of technical assistance and the expanded programme of technical assistance the UN had set the foundation of three types of development aid. The first was to deploy experts to help foster development in the host countries by sharing knowledge and knowhow where the second and third was getting grants or stipends and purchasing new equipment for demonstrations or pilot projects (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). The establishment of these UN programmes also led the Danish government (1950-1953) to set up a council for technical assistance to developing countries with a secretariat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they would be the point of contact for the UN programmes. This would be the first state-led organ dealing with technical development assistance and laid the foundation for development of Danish policy and strategy within the field (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008).

A NEW DIRECTION – THE FIRST BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME FROM 1962 TO 2000

Throughout the 1950s, Denmark’s development efforts continued to run almost exclusively through the UN system, and it was not until 1962 that Denmark created its first ever bilateral development assistance programme for developing countries. The development assistance programme would replace the government council on technical assistance which had served as the focal point of contact to the corresponding programmes within the UN systems, and it came into effect with the Danish law on technical cooperation with developing countries¹⁰ (Folketingstidende, 1962). The creation of the development assistance programme had two political and economic considerations. The first consideration was that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as a result of reform in 1921 was organised with the purpose of supporting the interests of the private sector. In other words, the MFA had to gain and provide insights of foreign markets to help Danish companies with import and export activities. With the multilateralization of world trade through the 1950s, the importance of understanding foreign markets and being able to export goods increased (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). The second consideration was in part the participation in international organisations and their decision making processes and in part a response to new independent states following the decolonisation of many countries who saw the establishment of embassies as recognition of

¹⁰ Official Danish name: Lov om teknisk samarbejde med udviklingslandene. Adopted by parliament on the 14th of March 1962.

their national sovereignty (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). Notably, the name DANIDA¹¹ first appeared in 1963 a year after the establishment of Denmark's first development assistance programme (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023). In the period leading up to the creation of the law on technical cooperation with developing countries of 1962 there had been an explosive growth in international aid initiatives. The World Bank formed the International Development Association in 1959 and OECD established the Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) and the United States led several initiatives and was considered by some as instrumental in passing a resolution naming the 1960s "the UN decade of development". Largely, these activities reflected a backdrop in which both the United States and the Soviet Union put increasing importance on offering aid in their competition to establish alliances with developing nations (Brunbech P. Y., 2014). The backdrop was very evident. For example, the OECD DAC president was American, and the primary task was to encourage member states to expand their development aid regimes. This promotion of increased development cooperation was in practice called "burden sharing" and the purpose was to ensure superior competitive advantages compared to Soviet activities (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008; Brunbech & Olesen, 2013).

In the early 1960s there was not an established international tradition for statistics on foreign aid or development cooperation and therefore there was not a foundation for comparing the individual countries aid assistance (Brunbech P. Y., 2014). Throughout the 1950s Denmark had spent a fairly small amount of funding on development aid relative to Danish GNI despite its support for the aforementioned UN programme for technical assistance (Brunbech P. Y., 2014). In the period of 1960-1975 there was a substantial growth in Danish development aid. Notably, aid through bilateral cooperation saw significant growth. The aid through multilateral cooperation had a certain prestige to it, whereas the bilateral cooperation had the primary function of boosting Danish representation in the given recipient countries. Despite the significant growth in aid assistance starting in the early 1960s the American chairman of OECD DAC criticised Denmark for its "distressingly low" contribution at an evaluation in 1965. At the time Denmark contributed a mere 0.13 per cent of its GNI to development aid leading to significant growth in the following years as shown in Figure 5. The growth in aid funding meant Denmark matched the American aid as a percentage of GNI by 1969 and reached the

¹¹ Danish International Development Agency and subsequently Danish International Development Assistance.

recommendation of the UN (0.7 pct.) in 1978 (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008).

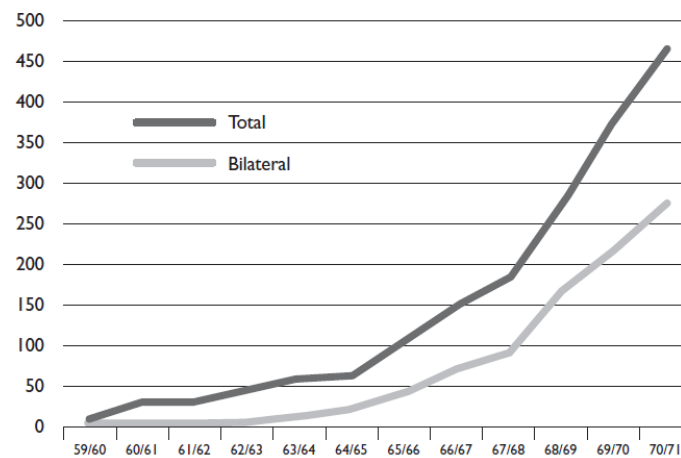


Figure 5 Danish aid from 1959/60 to 1970/71 in million DKK (Brunbech P. Y., 2014, p.149)

While growth of Danish development aid continued through the 1970s it had somewhat stagnated. This in part followed significant criticism of the multilateral development cooperation under the UN where Robert Jackson in a study of the capacity of the UUN development system heavily criticised the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their inefficiency and the lack of cohesion between development projects and the overall development strategy of the recipient country which in turn would support the expansive development of further bilateral cooperation (Jackson, 1969; Kaufmann, 1971). Towards 1975 Denmark established bilateral cooperation with countries such as India, Malawi, Egypt, Vietnam, Kenya, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tanzania and more. However, Danish development aid did not see a growth rate like that of the previous decade and in 1974, the former Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ove Guldberg stated that the oil crisis had hit Denmark hard and that developing countries had to have an understanding for a country such as Denmark having its own interest in securing its own continued economic development. This was part of a broader speech at the 29th UN general assembly in spring 1974. Following the assembly, former UN ambassador Hans Tabor argued, that the 29th assembly had a more controversial proceeding than prior assemblies as it clearly showed a North-South divide in which countries of the Global South or “the third world” stood together on a number of political issues such as the exclusion of South Africa at the assembly and giving an observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Furthermore, the 29th saw the UN adopt resolution 3201 and 3202 on “New International Economic Order” (NIEC) which outlined a vision for restructuring of global economic relations in which developing countries demanded a more just and equitable relationship between the prices of raw materials, primary commodities, manufactured and

semi-manufactured goods exported from the developing nations and the prices of raw materials, commodities and capital goods imported by them (Progressive International, 2022) (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). In Denmark, the 1970s also saw an increasing poverty orientation as the basis for allocation of aid assistance, which became evident with the adaptation of the Danish Act on International Development Cooperation. In addition, topics such as the environment, gender equality and human rights were established as important focus areas across the Danish development activities through the 1980s (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023). Denmark had initially been against the NIEC, and arguably continued to be somewhat against it, or at least the Danish ministers would avoid using the terms NIEC, instead new terms such as “interdependence” and “reciprocal dependence” were increasingly used to describe how the relation between the industrialised countries of the Global North and developing countries of the Global South. According to the former Danish minister Lise Østergaard, the terminology also represented a break with the “old understanding” of developing aid as charity. Thus, the interdependency terminology meant not looking at the North-South relation in a way in which aid to the South is seen as moral requirement of the Global North as a consequence of the colonial past but rather to look at the North-South relation in way where development in the North is seen as dependant on the South.

In the years following the 29th general assembly Denmark was coming out of the first oil crisis and the development aid started to grow slightly. By 1978, Denmark’s share of official development assistance reached the 0.7% GNI target (Kjær, 2022). As highlighted earlier, Denmark had previously received criticism for their low aid allocation after which the government committed itself to reach the 0.7% GNI target. Through the 1980s the share of official development assistance in comparison to GNI rose slightly (to 0.9 %) and finally hit 1% by the early 1990s where it remained stable throughout the 90s, although it could be argued, that the percentage was slightly higher if one includes the environmental and disaster relief funds following Danish commitments at the UN Rio conference in 1992 to dedicate additional funding for green initiatives in developing and post-communist countries (Kjær, 2022). The growth in official Danish development assistance since receiving criticism in 1965 was not merely altruistic (Wohlgemuth, 2008). The growth in development assistance through the 1980s and 1990s took place on a backdrop of a broader foreign affairs policy through which Denmark wanted to develop and strengthen its reputation as a friend to developing countries. Additionally, the Danish private sector represented by Danish Industry Association and others started to engage more actively in development policy domestically, which meant that the

Danish private sector would start to put forth demands for a clearer private sector focus in development activities, which in turn led to an increased political focus on the area (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). Due to development assistance becoming an increasingly high profile element of Danish foreign policy, the same time-period is characterised by a significant expansion of DANIDA who would go through a restructuring from being an independent unit to being part of a single-service within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023), essentially becoming its own Department. In the Danish development community, there is a certain negativity surrounding the 1980s, with some referring to it as a lost decade. Through the 1980s there had been a somewhat pessimistic atmosphere surrounding development activities in the international community which according to Bach et. al. (2008) were affected by the spread of “Reaganism/Reaganomics”, increasing debt problems and several concrete experiences in which development in the recipient countries seemed to go backwards rather than forwards. Already prior to entering the 1980s there had once again been criticism towards the effect of development activities as Gunnar Myrdal, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission (UNECE), questioned the effectiveness of development and bilateral aid. Through the 1980s Gunnars criticism was increasingly confirmed by practical experiences. In the Danish bilateral activities, there were some key challenges discovered which included a lack of success in ensuring growth targets, difficulties including an orientation towards poverty alleviation through the aid activities, difficulties including the local authorities and local populations. In regard to ensuring local capacity to continue the projects after the project periods had finalised the efforts are best described as a failure. To an extent, it could be argued that some of these problems had its roots in the recipient country but several of the problems were also a result of vague project descriptions and objectives, an unresolved debate regarding poverty and growth focus and because the supported projects did not account for whether the recipient country would be able to continue using the implemented technologies and experiences after the projects had been finalised (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008).

Interestingly, in the years following a somewhat pessimistic mindset in the international community surrounding development assistance, and several negative Danish experiences, the trend in the international community was generally to reduce its official development assistance, a trend which Denmark did not follow as Danish ODA increased (Kjær, 2022). The early 1990s reflected optimism following the fall of the Berlin wall 1989 and a belief in

“positive” changes in the central and eastern European countries. Denmark increased its funding for development aid significantly in this period. A key target was to have ODA be at least 1% of GNI by 1992, in other words slightly higher than the 0.7% recommendation by the UN. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, a former Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs is quoted for saying the development aid could not be spent quick enough and in an article in Danish newspaper “Jyllands-Posten” they referred the development community as “drowning in money” and ultimately this period resulted in a strategy titled “A Developing World: Strategy for Danish development policy towards 2000” (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). The strategy had a thematic focus on poverty reduction, bilateral partnerships with recipient governments which arguably represented a politicisation of the foreign aid and finally a focus on democracy and human rights (Kjær, 2022).

THE NEW MILLENNIUM OF “SUSTAINABILITY” FROM 2000 TO 2023

The growth of Danish development aid through the 1990s did not continue into the new millennium. For OECD DAC, the ODA did not have a general tendency of decline through the 00s, and neighbouring countries such as Sweden and Norway actually increased their development aid through the 00s, contrary to Denmark who saw budget cuts in foreign aid, most significantly in 2001 and 2015. At both occasions the budget cuts followed a centre-right government taking power.

The budget cuts following centre-right governments taking power is not insignificant as the campaigns of the liberal parties had a focus on aid cuts on both occasions. It was also a time where development policy was getting increased attention as seen through more debates on development policy in parliament (Kjær, 2022).

The new millennial also saw a shift towards large-scale intervention in areas of conflict from some of the traditional development activities. This shift had already started with the increased focus on peace and security through the 1990s. Essentially, the new large-scale intervention in conflict areas covered intervention in the Balkans, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iraq. According to the MFA, development assistance was utilised as an active policy instrument for conflict resolution, the battle against terrorism and the promotion of “good governance” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023). Kjær (2022) argues that Denmark’s approach to development aid in the new millennium represents a paradigm shift and that Denmark has primarily reacted to increasing waves of migration, increased fragility and the

threat of terrorism. However, by the 2010s Denmark still had a focus on poverty reduction and a large part of the bilateral assistance still went to social sectors such as education and health. Denmark continues to have bilateral development programmes with a limited number of countries, while multilateral aid is primarily granted through the UN, World Bank, the European Union and other relevant institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023).

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the UNs SDGs Denmark has had an increasing focus on the concept of a just transition in conjunction with its key sector areas. This was also highlighted in “The World 2030”, which was Denmark’s strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action published following the adoption of the UN 2030 and the 17 SDGs.

In the area of development policy and aid, Denmark has been heavily criticised for not giving enough. The country has managed to transition from this criticism to being known as a “global good Samaritan”. But what does this mean in practice? Has Denmark’s approach significantly evolved over time, or has it remained somewhat stagnant under varying political trends and rebranded programmes? The historical analysis of Denmark’s development activities would suggest that key elements have remained the same throughout where different political motives might have indicated slight changes in certain directions without it being radical. However, as the literature review also highlights, two schools of thought can be identified in Danish development literature. One school believes the development approach has hardly developed whereas the other believes a significant paradigm shift has taken place following the new millennium and more recent years.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE

THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

China is a country of many apparent contradictions. On the one hand, China is a communist country in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has held and maintained a monopoly on political power since they seized it in 1949 (Lawrence & Martin, 2012) and on the other hand China has become the world’s second largest economy with the second highest number of billionaires (Kennedy, 2011) and vast challenges of income inequality (World Bank, 2023).

In 1978 the People's Republic of China began to reform its economy and open to the outside world. It is now 45 years later and in that time period China's gross domestic product (GDP) growth has averaged around 9 per cent a year. Additionally, approximately 800 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty while the country has seen significant improvements in access to social services such as health and education through the same period (World Bank, 2023).

China's rapid development and economic growth has elevated the country to what would be considered an upper-middle-income country and Figure 6 shows that China has all but eradicated what could be considered extreme poverty. However, according to the World Bank, a significant portion of the population remain vulnerable as they are in an income bracket which is below a threshold which would typically be used to define poverty in middle income countries (World Bank, 2023).

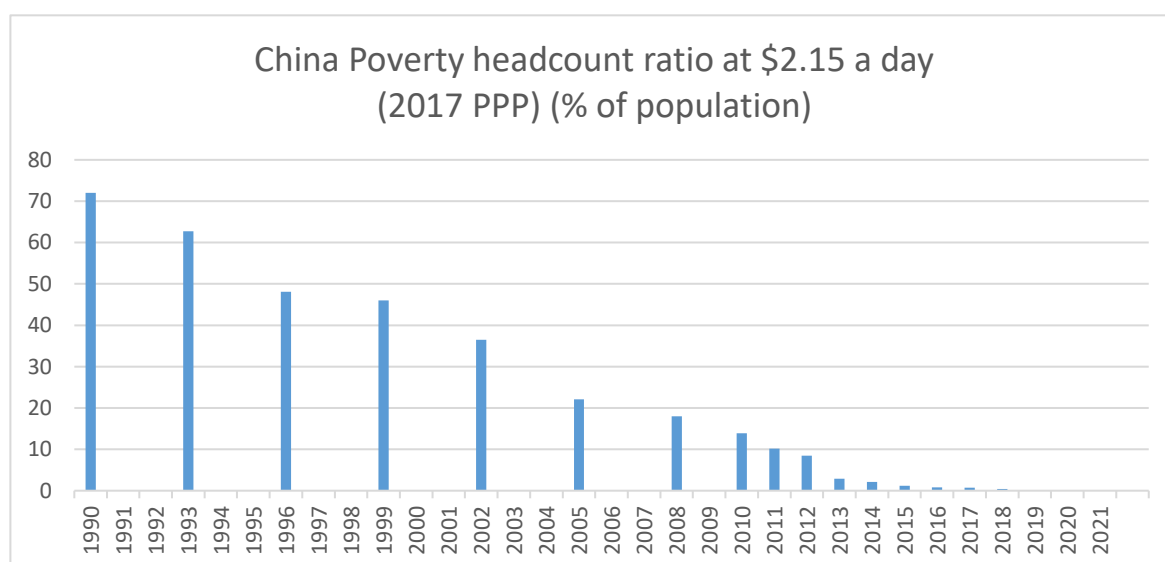


Figure 6 China poverty headcount as percentage of population. Source: data.worldbank.org

Despite China having become the second largest economy in the world, the country still refers to itself as a developing country and by the accounts of most international organisations, China remains a developing country (Fuxuan, 2023). The OECD DAC based their assessment of developing countries on per capita income based on World Bank data. By this definition, China remains a developing country as of 2023 (OECD DAC , 2023) and is therefore still a recipient of official development assistance from countries such as Denmark and other OECD members. Though continued economic development and a higher per capita income could elevate China from developing to developed country in which case the ODA would presumably start to be phased out. If one looks further than the per capita income, one could also look at the per capita export of goods. China has become the world's largest exporter of goods, the country continues

to have a relatively low export per capita. In fact, China's export per capita in 2019 was a mere US \$1716 compared to the OECD average of \$7948 while the average of upper-middle income countries as per OECD DACs definitions is around \$1875 (Dadush, 2021) which could give some further justification as to why international organisations such as the OECD continues to see China as a developing country.

Within the World Trade Organization, China also continues to designate itself as a developing country and remains classified as such based on the same income-per-capita criteria from the World Bank which OECD DAC based their assessment on (Dadush, 2021). While China remains a recipient of ODA and is considered a developing country by OECD-DAC definitions, China's role has changed. As China has developed, the country has significantly increased its infrastructure footprint in other countries including those on the African continent where China is behind several projects on ports, railroads, dams, renewable energy production and more (IDE-Jetro, 2022). It could be argued that this is an example of the global development landscape evolving. As it evolves, South-South cooperation grows increasingly prominent and enables a country such as China to go beyond being a recipient country to being a donor sharing their experiences, which is a process the OECD has estimated will enrich the effectiveness agenda of development cooperations as countries with comparable development levels and challenges can share solutions with higher degree of transferability to local and social conditions (OECD, 2011).

China's rapid economic development has predominantly been based on low-cost manufacturing, exports and investments which has led to several economic, social and environmental imbalances and an economy with a high carbon intensity (World Bank, 2023). China now accounts for over 1/4th of the world's annual CO₂ emissions and 1/3rd of the world's GHG emissions with per capita emission surpassing the European Union¹² (World Bank, 2023).

This, in part, is a consequence of a process in which companies of countries in the Global North through globalisation trade has relocated some energy intensive industries such as many manufacturing activities to China, which is an example of the transfer of GHG-emissions and pollutants from the Global North to the Global South (Chen & Li, 2021).

¹² It should be noted that China's per capita emissions remain lower than the OECD average.

Among China experts, China's status as a developing country has long been debated, not least because of their large economy and numerous activities in other countries. In 2021 and 2022 it remained a subject of debate by the United States where some politicians advocated for the US to use their influence to strip China of its status as a developing country (Kanwit, 2023). The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development has in their own words also stopped treating China like a developing country and is calling for China to take on more responsibility within the international community to make contributions towards grand global challenges. In reality, Germany continues its bilateral cooperation although at a different pace than it used to. Today, the development cooperation in China predominantly focuses on sustainable development (Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2023) similar to many of Denmark's development cooperations in China.

One of the arguments for the development cooperation with China is found in the difficulties facing the country, which have an impact on the rest of the world. Due to the size of China, the country is central to many regional as well as global development issues. As previously mentioned, China accounts for enormous amounts of CO₂ and GHG emissions with the CO₂ emissions equivalent to about 27 % of the world's total CO₂ emissions (World Bank, 2023). Air and water pollution from China lead to regional and global environmental challenges and it is fair to assume that grand challenges such as climate change will not be solved without China's engagement. Additionally, China is facing a plethora of other development challenges such as the transition to a new growth model (moving up the global supply chain), a rapidly aging population and their carbon intensive energy system (World Bank, 2023).

DENMARK IN CHINA

Denmark was among the first countries in the world to recognise the People's Republic of China and marked its 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Shortly after China opened up after the pandemic (COVID-19), the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy Mr. Dan Jørgensen visited China. Following the visit, the minister said the following:

“China is the world's largest emitter of CO₂. They account for more than 30 per cent of the world's emissions... if we want to have any chance of living up to the target of limiting the increasing temperatures to less than 1,5 degrees we need China to be part

of the solution”. (Dan Jørgensen, 30.05.2023 in AvisenDanmark)¹³, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

During the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy’s visit to China, Denmark strengthened its existing development cooperation on renewable energy by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with China’s National Energy Administration. In the press release that followed the Minister is quoted for saying:

“China is the world’s largest emitter of CO₂. It’s in the interest of the whole world that China gets through its green transition. It is not a coincidence, but it makes me immensely proud, that China looks to Denmark for green solutions. Through the cooperation we utilise our world leading competencies within green energy to lower global CO₂-emissions”. (Dan Jørgensen, press release “Danmark skal hjælpe Kina med vedvarende energi og fjernvarme” 21.04.2023 by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, para. 2)¹⁴.

With how the Minister has chosen to frame the cooperation there is no doubt that the Danish bilateral development cooperation, at least within energy, can be characterised as technical development cooperation programmes.

In February 2021, the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten wrote an article that sparked debates pertaining Danish development activities in China. As background for the article the paper had received numbers from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs which show that Denmark as of February 2021 had ongoing development cooperations with a total value of approximately DKK 170 million. The government-to-government cooperations such as the strategic sector cooperation accounted for the majority of the funds at a total of DKK 104,5 million. The article highlighted that the remaining funds primarily covered work on topics such as human rights (Broberg, 2021). Shortly after the article was published Danish development cooperation in China became subject to debate in the Danish parliament where some of the Danish parties showed disagreement with Denmark providing development aid to China (Folketinget, 2021). Despite the debates in parliament, the Danish government recently launched a new work programme in China following a visit by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke

¹³ Please note that the quote is translated from Danish to English.

¹⁴ The quote is translated from Danish to English and the original press release can be found here: <https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/13677981/danmark-skal-hjaelpe-kina-med-vedvarende-energi-og-fjernvarme?publisherId=2012662>

Rasmussen. The Green Joint Work Programme between China and Denmark follows up on the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” from 2008 and a joint work programme from 2017. The new agreement states that Denmark and China will take effective actions as to promote stronger, greener and healthier global development, make due contribution to the 17 SDGs and promote areas of mutual interest such as human rights, the UN sustainable development agenda and the Paris Agreement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2023).

With the launch of the new Joint Green Work Programme Denmark and China has strengthened its cooperation on sectors such as climate and energy, water and environment, maritime, food and agriculture and health which coincides with the ongoing Danish development cooperations in China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). According to DANIDA, one of their policies is to be transparent about Denmark’s development cooperations and therefore one is able (to the extent it is updated) find information about the different development cooperations through DANIDA’s website and the Danish “Lovtidende C” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA, 2023). Through these sites it is possible to access information about the fund allocations such as for the former cooperation between Copenhagen municipality and Beijing municipality on city development which had a budget of 8,5 million DKK (2018) (Lovtidende C, 2019), SSC on health with a budget of 8,5 million DKK (Lovtidende C, 2021), the SSC on clean heating with a budget of 10 million, or the SSC on food and agriculture with a budget of 7 million DKK (Ministry of Foreign Affairs DANIDA, 2023).

The sector cooperations in China are facilitated by Danish experts posted at the embassy and their role is to facilitate the cooperation between the Danish partner authority, an agency or ministry, and the Chinese partner which can be a ministry, academy or institute (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

Under each of the strategic sector cooperations facilitated by the counsellors of the embassy, a relevant sustainable development goal is highlighted. As an example, the SSCs for food aim to address SDG 2 on “no hunger” whereas the SSCs on energy aim to address SDG 7 on “affordable and clean energy”. Furthermore, one can to an extent find information about the programmes which include a justification for the DANIDA support. In the case of the strategic sector cooperation in the food sector between Denmark and China the justification for allocating development aid to the project is linked to the main outputs of the programme. These are improved food safety and elimination of food loss and waste. In their justification they further highlight that improved food safety is important to ensure sufficient food and safe foods

for the population in China while lowering the risk of cross-border contaminants in food. As for the elimination of food loss, this focus area is justified with a focus on lowering greenhouse gas emissions and increasing efficiency in the use of land and water (MFA File No. 2017-39186, 2023)¹⁵. Denmark has a broad cooperation within energy where some are under the administrative umbrella of the Danish Energy Partnership Programme (DEPP III) and others are facilitated as strategic sector cooperations under the memorandum of understanding with China's National Energy Administration. Denmark had two ongoing SSCs on energy in China, one on offshore wind (DKK 7,5 million) and one on clean heating focused on district heating (DKK 10 million). The offshore wind programme is no longer active. The justification of the clean heating SSC is found in China having the world's largest district heating system and that a large expansion is expected as part of China's transition (MFA File No. 2018-46817, 2023)¹⁶. Similar for the various project descriptions is their assessment of major risks and challenges. The assessments are relatively vague and kept brief, essentially summarizing that the results will depend on the Danish and Chinese partner authorities and stakeholders, political will and access to information. Coincidentally, the description further states that these risks will be mitigated by regular steering committee meetings (Ministry of Foreign Affairs DANIDA, 2023) which also happen to be part of the SSC guidelines developed by DANIDA. On the website of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in China it is also clear that the Sino-Danish Cooperation Agreements mainly focus on technical assistance. Despite poverty reduction being a stable throughout the Danish history of development cooperation and "a more secure and sustainable world free from poverty" being the first line of the vision for Denmark's development cooperation in its new strategy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021b), it can be difficult to spot in the China cooperation. This, of course, makes sense given that China has all but eradicated poverty as shown in Figure 6, and because of this, the Danish Council for Development Policy has criticised the development cooperations in countries such as China (Heldgaard, 2023). In fact, minutes from a meeting of the Danish Council on Development Policy from June 2023 show that the Council could not recommend the new framework programme for SSCs on the Health Sector (China, India, Brazil, Vietnam and Mexico) for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy calling for the Ministry of the Interior and Health to adjust the framework to better reflect the development purpose in the form of indicators on poverty orientation. In addition, the Council

¹⁵ File available on www.um.dk under "Grants below DKK 43 million".

¹⁶ File available on www.um.dk under "Grants below DKK 43 million".

criticised the lack of partner countries from the African continent. Moreover, the minutes show that Council could not find convincing arguments as to capacity building being the main objective and argued that development funds could not be used for the secondary purposes (Council for Development Policy, 2023). As previously introduced the secondary purpose of the SSC programmes refer to diplomacy and promotion of Danish private sector interests.

In the area of climate and energy, the council also criticised the latest suggestion for an updated framework programme¹⁷ for the strategic sector cooperations within the areas of the Ministry for Climate, Energy and Utilities and called out the lack of poverty orientation and specific development objectives and results. Furthermore, the Council highlighted that while the recently suggested framework did have a clearer presentation of capacity building as the main purpose this was not reflected in the results framework where diplomacy and private sector interest weighed heavy. The minutes of the meeting from the 1st of June 2023 further show, that some Council Members expressed concern about the risk of development funds being used actively to support Danish companies (Council for Development Policy, 2023).

In summary, Denmark's development cooperation with China is not without its share of controversy and criticism. Nevertheless, the Danish government has decided to sign a new "Joint Green Work Programme" in which they agree to strengthen cooperation on sectors coinciding with the focus areas of the ongoing Danish strategic sector cooperations in China.

STRUCTURE OF THE EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK IN CHINA

Denmark has three representations in mainland China and an additional representation in the form of the Trade Council in Taipei. The embassy in Beijing is Denmark's foremost diplomatic mission in China and it is structured as a matrix organisation with several sector teams, a political division as well as visa and consular departments¹⁸. The two remaining locations in China consist of the Royal Danish Consul General in Guangzhou and Shanghai respectively.

The sector teams within the matrix are Energy, Water and Environment, Food and Agriculture as well as the Health Sector (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). The maritime sector is currently located within the water and environment team but has previously also been under the energy team.

¹⁷ This framework programme covers China and up towards 9 other countries although 3 remain to be selected.

¹⁸ For this section I draw on observations from my own position at the embassy.

Each respective sector team consists of posted and local staff. Posted staff are personnel sent out from Denmark. In the sector teams, these usually consist of the team leader and the sector counsellors. In all cases, the leader of each respective sector team represents the Trade Council. The sector counsellors are funded by development funds (DANIDA) as part of their respective sector cooperations, and they are all located at the embassy in Beijing. Local staff is predominantly TC and spread across all locations. There is normally a local employee who dedicates at least half their time to assist the sector counsellors in their position.

Above the sector teams one finds the Minister Counsellor and coordinator for TC in China, the Deputy Head of Mission, and the Ambassador (Head of Mission).

ANALYSIS

Dissecting the nuances of Denmark's development strategy and strategic sector cooperations is nothing less than complex due to the evolving yet stagnate scholarly and academic standpoint, however the analysis section will attempt to analyse the potential changes within Danish development strategy by examining and comparing the current and previous strategies and the case of the application of strategic sector cooperations in China. The methods of semi-structured interview, secondary research, and observations have collected the fundamental data to be analysed. Despite the analysis not being a "traditional" comparative analysis, there is a comparative aspect as Danish development strategies will be compared to each other. In conjunction with the employed methods streams of the theory of new institutionalism will provide a lens to analyse while facilitating consideration of the key concepts introduced earlier in the thesis – strategic sector cooperation, just transition, critical junctures and path dependency.

When researching Danish development assistance two clear streams of thought emerge – the first arguing that Denmark still fundamentally approaches development assistance altruistically and is considered a good samaritan on the international forum of development assistance. The second – posits that there has been a decline if not complete discard of Denmark's altruistic approach and that a paradigm shift has occurred in Danish strategy for development cooperation. When broadly examining Danish development strategy it becomes apparent that it is understandable that the first stream of thought is present within the scholarly debates about Danish development assistance and its drivers. However, as you dig deeper certain conundrums arise as to the main drivers and potential "evolution" of Danish development assistance. For

example, it is evident that what can be argued as “critical junctures” have occurred throughout the history of Danish development strategy and that prioritisations have not been completely stagnant, yet that does not necessarily equate to Denmark’s approaches fundamentally evolving over time.

DANISH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The analysis of Danish development assistance will start from the inception of Denmark’s law on technical cooperation with developing countries up to Denmark’s current development strategy – ‘The World We Share’. The prioritisations outlined in the law on technical cooperation with developing countries from 1962 are very broad in nature with thematic focuses on the Danish private sector and aligning Denmark with international organisation with the field of development assistance. The private sector focus was considered as a tool to provide insight to foreign markets and facilitate Danish companies with import and export activities. Whereas the reasoning for the focus on aligning Denmark with international organisations is less attainable, however, it could be argued that Denmark aligning itself with international organisation relatively “early” in the history of development assistance would ensure their position within the institution of international development assistance. Furthermore, due to Denmark’s introduction to the forum of development assistance being due to membership in the UN it could be argued that Denmark had become indoctrinated to the “institution” of international development assistance in the structures of international organisations. Therefore, based on the theory of sociological institutionalism Denmark conformed to the “rules of appropriateness” stipulated by the international organisations. During this period within the field of development cooperation the concept of “burden sharing” became a common practice or normative idea that was expected of countries aligned with the United States. From the perspective of historical institutionalism, it could also be argued that Denmark’s introduction to development assistance and cooperations being through international organisations and their agendas was the critical juncture that set Danish development strategy and assistance on its path.

Danish development strategy in the period from 1962 to 1994 is difficult to properly analyse as there is a lack of usable and reliable data to compare, however, there are several mentions of what Denmark’s prioritisation were during this period and fortunately some scholars have gained access to archived files within the Danish MFA enabling a relatively detailed outline of the history as previously introduced. The 70s brought an increase in focusing on poverty made

apparent in the Danish Act on International Development. During the 80s the focus on environment, human rights and gender equality started being addressed in Danish development activities leading to the 90s when the first development strategy was published. This period introduced many of the thematic focus areas that have been included in contemporary Danish development strategies such as focus on poverty, environment, human rights and gender equality.

The period of emergence of new thematic focuses can arguably be viewed as a critical juncture based on historical institutionalism as it influenced the future formulation of Danish development strategies, evident by the fact that the thematic focuses that emerged were included in several future strategies. Additionally, in this period the NIEC was introduced and changed the structure of relations between the Global North and Global South as the NIEC signalled a shift away from the “moral requirement” of the Global North providing aid to the Global South due to their colonial pasts. In theory, this would result in a level of change to the economic world order, therefore, also arguably stands out as a second indication of critical juncture due to changing the structural dynamics between aid givers and receivers resulting in a punctured equilibrium making room for change to occur. However, through the lens of sociological institutionalism the inclusion of a wider array of thematic focuses could arguably be a result of socially driven path dependency as the agenda of what was appropriate and should be included in development strategies was determined by international organisations that Denmark was aligning itself with during this period (Thelen, 1999).

A Developing World: Strategy for Danish Development Policy Towards the Year 2000 was Denmark’s first official development strategy. The implementation of a strategy created a format that made it easier to examine Denmark’s approaches and prioritisations, therefore Denmark’s 6 development strategies have been compiled in Table 2 for easy comparison of the key components to each strategy and how they compare to their predecessor.

Comparison of Danish Development Strategies		
Name	Thematic Focus	Changes from prior Strategy
'A Developing World: Strategy for Danish Development Policy Towards the Year 2000', 1994 (In Danish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty reduction • Partnerships with recipient governments • Democracy and human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General budget support and earmarked sector support • Active multilateralism • Fewer countries and sectors
'Denmark's Development Policy Strategy. Partnership 2000', 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty reduction • Partnerships with recipient governments • Democracy, sustainability, human rights, and gender equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even stronger focus on poverty reduction and partnerships • Incorporation of MDGs and focus on alignment, harmonization, and ownership
'Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change: Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation', 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights, civil liberties, and freedom • Poverty reduction • Partnerships (not only with recipient governments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger focus on fragile states, terrorism, and migration • Introduced Danish interests as criterion for selecting partner countries
'The Right to a Better Life. Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation', 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights (universal and inseparable) • Complex partnerships • Poverty reduction • Fragile states and regions of origin • Policy coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More explicit rights-based approach • More focus on green growth
'The World 2030. Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action', 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs (of which poverty reduction is one) • Danish foreign policy, security, and economic interests • Regions of origin and migration • Private sector partnerships • Policy coherence • Just transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger emphasis on Danish interests • Abandonment of sector-budget support a move away from a focus on low-income countries • Focus on combining humanitarian and development aid
The World We Share, Denmark's strategy for development cooperation, 2021a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs (particularly climate, rights and poverty) • Causes of migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger emphasis on irregular migration and its causes • Stronger emphasis on climate • Less focus on the private sector

Table 2 Comparison of Danish Development Strategies (Kjær, 2022, p. 255)

In the 1990s the cold war was gradually coming to its end with the fall of the Soviet Union, and in the context of development aid, this enabled the Danish government and development agency to address the many problems related to the project-based approach to development cooperation that had been heavily criticised for its lack of impact. Within Denmark's first development strategy - A Developing World: Strategy for Danish Development Policy Towards the Year 2000 published in 1994 there was a focus on a few specific sector specific programmes within sectors such as agriculture, health and education (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). The reality was, that although there was a new focus on sector programmes, there had not been that big of a change from the project-based approach. Projects were now referred to as 'components' of a programme and they had to include somewhat clear target objectives and time frames from start to end. These were requirements for many donor countries, and the case of Denmark, it was linked to a need for planning and controlling how aid was given and ultimately to document its effects. This structure also meant, that while there was a newfound focus on local ownership, Denmark as a donor country could not keep from meddling, often on a quite detailed level, in local processes in the hopes of affecting policy reforms (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008).

Under the umbrella of what was called "good governance" Denmark as well as many other countries started to have an increasing focus on the political systems and governance in aid-receiving countries. This also became a key element of the strategy for Danish development -

Towards the Year 2000 (Aarhus Universitet, 2012)¹⁹. A Developing World: Strategy for Danish Development Policy Towards the Year 2000 thematic focuses were essentially good governance through promotion of human rights, poverty reduction, democratization and civil society by using a sector-partnership approach.

Six years later the thematic focuses were repeated in Denmark's development strategy - Partnership 2000. The development strategy highlighted its strong focus on poverty reduction stating that it was a "paramount problem in many developing countries" (Kjær, 2022, p. 354). However, there was the addition of gender equality, climate and environmental priorities to the thematic focus, whilst maintaining the partnership approach, which links to the focus areas in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) published by the UN in 2000 (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018).

Fast forward ten years to 2010 Denmark published the Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change: Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation. Many of the key thematic focuses from Partnership 2000 remained, however, the choice of cooperation countries had been altered opening the door for selecting countries that were not considered low income countries as partners with the introduction of three selection principles - "development need, relevance, impact and results" and specific reference to Danish interests (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018, p. 146). Additionally, the Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change included a stronger focus on fragile states, terrorism and migration. Presumably, a result of Denmark starting to employ hard solutions to security challenges instead of soft solutions with the rise of military interventions and channelling funds towards fragile states (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018). The increased inclusion of Danish security interest highlights the introduction of securitization to Danish development strategies. The period leading up to the Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change strategy has become synonymous with the "global" war on terror as a result of the 9/11 terror attack and subsequent chain of events. This period and the resulting strategy can arguably be considered a critical juncture in Danish development strategy as despite many of the thematic themes being repetitive in nature the introduction of securitization was a fundamental change. Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change strategy also had an increased focus on focusing on areas of conflict that resulted in high numbers of refugees (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018). Public opinion and discourse

¹⁹ Excerpt from "A Developing World: Strategy for Danish Development Policy Towards the Year 2000". The strategy originally published by DANIDA and put forth by Danish government in 1994.

about migration and specific regions shifted throughout this period. Therefore, through the lens of sociological institutionalism the shift was inevitable as what was considered appropriate on a global scale had changed. Furthermore, Kickert & Van der Mee (2011) argues that institutions generally change in an attempt to survive on a meta-level, therefore based on Wohlgemuth (2008) hypothesis the gradual changes that resulted in critical junctures within development strategy can be argued as being a result of appeasing set groups due to the evolution of public opinion. This is evident from the public opinion perspective but also Denmark's position in the world system and the intuitions they align themselves with.

In continuation of this line of discourse the same hypothesis was arguably present in Denmark's development strategy from 2017 – The World 2030 that many argue is a response to the “refugee crisis”. This is where I would argue the critical juncture in the Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change strategy came to a head as despite the war on terror introducing the concept of securitization you see Denmark draw a hard line once the issue officially reached Denmark with streams of irregular migration. The domestically felt ripple effect further solidified public and political discourse in a contentious time that resulted in a punctured equilibrium that allowed the shift to hard-line policies and arguably strategies. Despite the new focus of countering irregular migration and securitization the establishment of the SDGs meant that there was a referable point of reference for Denmark to base their development strategy on. Denmark's thematic focuses from previous strategies were still evident in The World 2030 just packaged in the SDG framework. Additionally, the partnership aspect was still the central approach but arguably the promotion of Danish interests and the private sector had been defined as being a point of prioritisation with a focus on investment and cooperation with transition and growth countries (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018).

Not to exclude a strategy Denmark had published The Right to a Better Life in 2012 between the two aforementioned strategies. The thematic focuses of the strategy were the same as its predecessor - Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change, however The Right to a Better Life standouts due to it introducing the human-rights based approach which is still fundamental to Danish strategy today (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018). Additionally, the increased focus on green growth started to become included in Danish development strategy (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018).

The World We Share was published in 2021 and is Denmark's latest development strategy. The focus on combating irregular migration is prevalent within the strategy from two

perspectives. The first being targeting conflict areas and fragile states that are classified as areas of origin and issues of climate and environment that can result in forced displacement (Kjær, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021b). Moreover, poverty reduction is a thematic focus but presented from the perspective of trying to minimise migration linking to the securitization theme that has become a part of Danish development strategies and policies. The strategy references “shared Nordic values” and “solving the great challenges of our time together”, yet research conducted by the Centre for Global Development’s Commitment ranks Denmark 13th globally in comparison to Sweden ranking 1st and Norway 3rd (Center for Global Development, 2023; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021b, p. 5). This indicates that a separation from so called Nordic values is occurring within the sphere of development cooperation, whilst there are indications that Denmark’s focus areas are aligning with countries that have more hard line policies and strategies that are partially driven by securitization.

The framework provided by SDGs is dominant within the strategy with many references to “green” and “sustainability” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021b). Reference is often made in academic discourse about Danish development strategy and policy’s shift to securitization and lack of focus on poverty, however reflection on the evolution of Danish development strategies also highlights how it has gradually changed its trajectory by focusing on sustainability and green growth (Kjær, 2022). Denmark now markets itself in reference to “green diplomacy” signalling an institutional shift that has been cumulating over time resulting in a quiet critical juncture as a result of collective and gradual changes over time.

Furthermore, despite it feeling like unnecessary reiteration, partnership and cooperation are still being used as key approaches in *The World We Share*. This sentiment leads to the semi-conclusion of the analysis of Danish development strategies that despite critical junctures occurring the fundamental thematic focuses of Danish development strategies are in principle the same when you draw a line from *Towards the Year 200* to *The World We Share*. There have been natural reframing of the thematic focuses due to external frameworks such as the MDGs and the SDGs and the scope of the challenges that need to be addressed but at its core arguably the approach and listed form of the focus areas stay constant.

DANIDA

DANIDA is the apparatus within the Danish MFA that has been responsible for the implementation of Denmark’s development strategies since their inception. In addition,

DANIDA is responsible for planning and quality assurance of Denmark's various development cooperations which are sometimes facilitated by sector specific ministries or agencies providing technical expertise from their respective fields.

As mentioned in the historical section the name first appeared in 1963 and was an abbreviation of "Danish International Development Agency" and later "Danish International Development Assistance".

DANIDA is first described as an independent development agency or at least an independent unit within the foreign service, whereas it has been an integrated part of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since the 1990s, where development cooperation grew to become an important and high-profile aspect of Denmark's foreign policy. However, historically DANIDA has been criticised for falling into the trap of 'volume fetishism' by focusing on the amount of ODA but not supporting it with strong institutional frameworks to ensure effective and lasting impact (Brunbech P. Y., 2014). The lack of effective institutional structures combined with DANIDA "drowning in money"²⁰ was a dangerous combination that some scholars have referred to as the wasted period in Danish development assistance as it was plagued by vague project descriptions and objectives (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008). Arguably, the realities and consequences of this period and DANIDA's failings were driven by Denmark using aid as a way to employ action that was driven by public demand. As the public opinion of the time period was positive towards the idea of giving aid and the establishment of Denmark as a 'moral superpower' (Brunbech P. Y., 2014, p. 141). Arguably, this is an example of how institutions' direction can be influenced or determined through the socialisation of what is deemed appropriate within a certain time period based on the theoretical framework of sociology institutionalism. Additionally, the application of discursive institutionalism is arguably relevant as based on its hypothesis ideas or discourse can lead to change, which in this case is the increase in ODA as it appears to be a result of public discourse. Rational choice theory also offers a competing analytical lens as the focus on providing large amounts of ODA gave a return to Denmark by increasing its chances of marking itself as a moral superpower within the global structure.

Since the period of DANIDA's rapid rise and fall back to the reality of being a government apparatus the focus on measurable impact and evaluation became central to the DANIDA

²⁰ Paraphrased quote from former Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen in Jyllands-Posten, found in (Bach, Olesen, Kaur-Pedersen, & Pedersen, 2008).

structure (Ulbæk & Nøhr, 2014). This shift coincided with the increased international focus on aid effectiveness highlighted in the Paris, Accra and Busan Declarations (Ulbæk & Nøhr, 2014). Within DANIDA this led to the introduction of systematic use of theories of change by basing “programming on theories of change that provides plausible links between the input that is provided and the outcome and impact sought for, and that these theories of change are tested on a regular basis during implementation to ensure that assumptions are dealt with and risks mitigated” and promoting local ownership (Ulbæk & Nøhr, 2014, s. 452).

DANIDA's role as an integral part of the Danish MFA could be seen as problematic. For example, the Council on Development Policy has previously criticised the strategic sector cooperations and their frameworks for having their focus on what is described as secondary outputs, namely diplomacy and trade relations (Council for Development Policy, 2023). One of their fears is that Danish aid is being used to promote Danish private sector interest. While one could argue that it is not necessarily a problem that there is a focus on diplomatic relations as part of aid, one could fear that too concentrated of a strategic focus on diplomacy and bilateral relations would risk taking focus away from the countries and people who might be in the most need of aid. One could question whether this is already the case, when one examines some of the countries Denmark focus its development cooperation on. Countries such as China, India, and Brazil are countries where Denmark has significant development cooperation but also might have particular strategic interests in, as the countries are commonly known as fast growing emerging economies with vast potential export markets and countries important for the import of raw materials and goods.

Despite the evident criticisms it is important to acknowledge that within the field of development assistance and cooperation it is difficult for development agencies to be classified as altruistic, effective and capable of tangible impact as the field of development assistance has highlighted that it can be difficult to quantify the actual impact and that there are many constraints that limit ideal integration and implementation in developing countries. Therefore, irrespective to the debate as to the actual drivers of Danish ODA being altruistic, self-serving or a combination the Danish model has been referred to as one of the highest rated systems globally by OECD (Skrzydło, 2011). Yet, the Centre for Global Development's Commitment to Development Index Denmark's rating of Denmark has dropped exponentially since 2011. In 2011 Denmark placed third on the index behind Sweden and Norway compared to the latest ranking which places Denmark as 13th globally whilst Sweden and Norway are still in the top

3 (Center for Global Development, 2023). This gives a strong indication that Denmark's central place in providing development is in decline. However, it should be acknowledged that reduction of the funding DANIDA receives could be a contributing factor to their capabilities and quality of aid modalities (Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov, 2018).

JUST TRANSITION AND STRATEGIC SECTOR COOPERATIONS IN CHINA

The analysis of strategic sector cooperations and the integration of the concept of just transition will be based on the interview with a Sector Counsellor and analysis of the SSC framework. Reliance on primary data is necessary as there is a lack of academic literature investigating the strategic sector cooperation approach and the implementation of the concept of a just transition. The concept of just transition is a relatively new focus in Denmark's development strategy and sometimes it seems that the concept gets lost within the field of development assistance.

The mandate of SSCs is to contribute to addressing the SDGs and supporting a socially just green transition. In my interview with a Sector Counsellor from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Beijing it became apparent that the applicability and validity of the mandate varies depending on the country Denmark is cooperating with. Within the context of China, the interview made it clear that despite them trying to include the concept of just transition in their work the realities of the dynamic between Danish and Chinese authorities are not necessarily conducive to this exchange. Supported by the interviewee stating that they do not believe that China's focus on a just transition will be influenced by the SSC however that "it's important that we try to highlight key elements of a just transition [and that] I think in some ways we have an obligation to talk about the importance of this" (Interview, 00:31:02-00:31:33). However, it could be argued that China is only open to being 'influenced' due to the concept already being somewhat visible in the "Chinese system [even though] it's still in development" (Interview, 00:31:55-00:31:56). Furthermore, the interviewee argues "that if there's any country that could do it, it probably is China and maybe that also comes down to [China's] political system... and the political power they have" (Interview, 00:30:32-00:30:45), which gives a positive indication that if China decides to prioritize a just transition the likelihood of successful implementation is high. Yet, whilst the idea of Danish cooperations supporting and promoting just transitions is amiable the structural shift in ideology and thinking required limits the reality of this objective being obtainable theoretically in China but also other cooperation countries.

Based on the results of the analysis of Danish development strategies it is evident that despite some scholars arguing that the focus on Danish interests and the Danish private sector is a new addition we can see its incorporation since the inception of Danish development assistance through the implementation of bilateral technical assistance programmes all the way back in 1962. Despite strategic sector cooperations being composed of three objectives it was deemed necessary for the thesis to establish if having a private sector objective was new as with the role out of the SSC Framework it was presented as an integral and newer component. With that fact established we can zoom in on strategic sector cooperations as a tool in the MFA's toolbox.

The strong focus on the private sector in the case of SSC programmes in China and other countries on a broader scale could arguably be observed and rationalised through the lens of rational choice institutionalism. Denmark's choice of cooperation countries indicate that there is a level of calculated bias that seems to guide the agreements made as Denmark's focus countries double as large export markets that offer a potential high return on their 'investment'. Furthermore, the countries enable Denmark to hypothetically contribute to combating the largest CO2 reduction potentials on a global scale – which is nothing short of a politically pleasing statement for the so called “good samaritans” of the development assistance forum. Arguably it is easier from Denmark to provide ODA to a country where there is a higher chance they can contribute to SDGs or at a minimum posit that that is their intention. Furthermore, based on the hypothesis of rational choice theory actors' choices are guided by the action that results in the most preferable payoff with, which arguably in this case is providing ODA to countries with the highest potential of paying it back. Intensified by the rational choice idea that Denmark's continuous cooperations with China despite criticism is due to there being no incentives to divert from what has been resulting in returns for Denmark and the Danish private sector. Additionally, the concept of path dependency has relevance based on the argument that Danish cooperation is an established path for the institution of the Danish MFA as historical efficiency posits that institutions repeat patterns that are deemed effective.

In continuation of the private sector indicator the thesis will analyse the placement of TC in the structure of the embassy. As highlighted in the *structure of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in China* section of the thesis, sector teams are led by TC representatives. This structure raises some red flags if sector counsellors are there to facilitate SSC programmes without being influenced by the private sector agenda. The interviewee gave strong indications that the dynamic results in sector counsellors having to find an intricate balance between the

programme focuses and activities “that does not necessarily align with the given objectives or interests that a Danish company who collaborates with TC within the same subject might focus on” (00:05:04-00:05:21) which are being pushed forward by their team leader. However, this structure indicates where Denmark’s priorities lie in China, as in countries such as South Africa that are arguably experiencing more acute challenges e.g. an unstable energy supply and lack of access to clean water, the TC apparatus is separate to the SSC apparatus presumably giving the sector counsellor more autonomy to focus on the SSC objectives²¹. This is not to say that there should not be overlap between TC and SSC as the private sector is still an SSC objective and can be beneficial “because they have an understanding of the sector that is well founded” (Interview, 00:56:44-00:56:51). However, the interviewee believes that the private sector should not have more involvement “in the day to day of the project but in the context of developing the programme activities and providing input to the local situation and challenges, I would say that it's a benefit to involve the Danish private sector” (Interview, 00:56:24-00:56:44).

The indication that the private sector input would be valuable at the inception of development cooperations as they have an intimate understanding of the field within the partner country and link to the local ownership aspect of SSC programmes. In principle the SSC framework is supposed to facilitate a holistic approach to the challenges faced by the partner country. As despite the focus on the issue within the SSC framework the reality gives strong indicators that remnants of old ‘failures’ are reoccurring in the implementation and daily running of SSC programmes. For example, the interviewee states “one of my criticisms would be that they often become too vague” (Interview, 01:01:50) which links to the criticism of DANIDAs earlier approaches. Additionally, although local ownership is a criteria within the SSC framework the fact that day to day project management is the responsibility of an individual in the Danish partner authority, which the interviewee reflected as being;

“unfortunate in some ways that the project management is done in the partner authority back home... I think it could work to facilitate the cooperation, but I think when you then have the project management run in Denmark, instead of for instance by the sector counsellor who's posted in a given country, who gets a better local understanding... I think something is kind of missing there” (Interview, 00:37:31-00:38:03).

²¹ Based on observation of the structure of the Embassy of Denmark in South Africa

The interviewees' response indicates that the framework of having a project manager sitting in Denmark impacts the level of effectiveness, understanding of local conditions and local ownership. This is further evident in the interviewees statement that;

“sometimes it can be difficult for the partner organisation to take in.. dialogue on the regulatory framework changes and then actually implement it in a way that's beneficial because oftentimes when we have the dialogue it is of course based on the Danish experience and the Danish regulation and then you try to present... and you try to say this is not necessarily transferable to your country and then in the Chinese context, they'll look at you and they'll be like, we have different regulations... we have different needs so maybe we can't have the same regulation [then] it becomes this sometimes slightly vague discussion” (Interview, 01:02:25-01:03:51).

This revelation indicates strong linkages to the issues that arose from earlier development interventions that did not provide an effective institutional structure for implementation of cooperations. Therefore, despite DACs praise of Denmark's decentralization of aid management there are still fundamental issues that arise in the day-to-day workings of the programme (Engberg-Pedersen L. , 2014). Arguably, the principle of local ownership is integral to the success of development cooperations; however, it is understandable that when a development agency has to justify and evaluate their partnerships and programmes that letting go of the reins is difficult if not bordering impossible. Especially, when Denmark is the project “owner” and responsible for the administrative side of the programme. Of course, there are issues about the reliability of the receiving country and that contributes to Denmark wanting to hold the reins tightly, but it appears that it is often counteractive to their goals especially if an effective framework for transparency for the project is established or joint project management.

Reference to another issue that has previously been mentioned in the discourse of development assistance is the exporting of best practices. As previously mentioned, bilateral technical assistance cooperations are not a new tool in Denmark's toolbox with applying Danish best practices being central to the approach. With many of Denmark's previous approaches referring to a similar guiding principles and project management guidelines such as Guidelines for Sector Programme Support 1996 & 1998, Guidelines for Programme Management 2003, 2009 & 2011, Guidelines for Country Programmes 2013 & 2014, Technical Assistance in Danish Bilateral 2004 and the Guidelines for Technical Assistance 2009 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs

of Denmark, 2015). In the context of SSCs in China transferring Danish best practices is a key aspect and arguably relevant in the field Denmark has proved competence.

However, the issue of transferability will always be present and in some cases glaringly obvious – such as the case of Danish cooperations with China. As despite Denmark's competence within the sectors covered by SSCs in China there are large structural and cultural difference that are very difficult to navigate, such as China being a world power, different political system, scale of transitions needed, difference in population & country scale, institutional structure and level of development which determines what the government classifies as a priority.

In spite of the criticism that SSC programmes show indication of stagnation in approaches used by Denmark, the fact that influencing policy and regulatory frameworks are a key element to the SSC programmes shows great promise. As based on discourse regarding effective development approaches there are substantial arguments that policy is essential in developing countries. Booth (2011) draws on the example of implementation of policy in African countries versus South-East Asian countries concluding that the growth and poverty reduction in South-East Asian countries that adopted policy that contributed to combating challenge areas lead to substantial improvement over the 50-year period (Booth, 2011).

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

In this section I reflect on some of the critical that occurred whilst conducting the analysis section of this thesis.

One aspect that I feel left lacked consideration within the academic works pertaining to Danish development assistance is the hypothesis that the concept of development diplomacy has become an institutionalised aspect of Denmark's approach to development assistance strategies and approaches (Zielińska, 2016). This is evident in the SSC framework where one of the main objectives is diplomacy, however I acknowledge that the inclusion of the framing of the 'diplomatic objective' is done to facilitate and strengthen Denmark's relations with partner countries. Additionally, many scholars have argued that Denmark has used its status within the international development community as a moral superpower to solidify their global positioning. Yet, when examining the whole apparatus of Denmark's approaches and strategies it indicates that the underlying 'norm' of Denmark establishing and using their 'soft power' from development assistance and cooperations is arguably an internalised and expected cultural

norm facilitated by the sociological institutionalism that has seemingly occurred throughout the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an institution.

In addition to the interview with the interviewee from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark in Beijing providing valuable insight into the realities of working within the SSC framework it also provided an interesting base to investigate the Danish MFA as an institution through the lens of sociological institutionalism. Selected responses from the interviewee were very constrained in nature, for example when the interviewee was asked;

“Do you feel that there is an ethical and political responsibility that then a country like Denmark is present in China working towards development even though the country has developed so much and is just on the precipice of no longer being classified as a developing country?” (Interview, 00:27:47-00:28:05)”²²

The interviewee responded “I don't know if I think there's ethical or moral obligations that Denmark necessarily needs to consider. I think that would be up to the politicians” (Interview, 00:28:08-00:28:20). Then the interviewee responded later in the interview that it “comes down largely to political priority whether or not you want to focus on poverty as the main thing” (Interview, 1:09:54-1:10:02) in response to the question of;

“Due to this do you think that poverty reduction should play or should be a key aspect within Denmark's development strategy or do you think it is time for it to play a supporting role in relation to the world's other grand challenges?” (Interview, 1:09:26-1:09:51).

The interviewees' non-response of an answer and deflection to its institutional structure is arguably an example of sociological institutionalism “rules of appropriateness” in action. Aligning with the argument that institutions set the cognitive frames and scripts and that the individual has internalised the formal and informal rules expected within the institution's social construct (March & Olsen, 1984; Schmidt, 2010).

²² Question was asked in follow-up to China's classification as a developing country and being relevant to SDGs because of their CO2 emissions and potential global impact if reduced.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of Denmark's development strategies indicates that despite an array of critical junctures occurring throughout the history of Danish development assistance, and vast debate of what the drivers of the strategies are, the focus areas have not really changed considerably over time. Arguably, they have evolved by adding focus areas or trending concepts but in theory there has to be space for ebbs and flows within prioritisation without it being classified as a "paradigm shift". Based on the analysis of Danish strategies there are indications that Denmark's motives were once at a minimum more altruistic than they currently appear, yet on the global scale of development assistance Denmark is pulling its weight in relation to the norms stipulated by international organisations – and is this not enough? Arguably Denmark's motive is a moot point as long as they are contributing to the development goals to the best of their ability. However, in my opinion, the aforementioned statement does have ethical and moral limitations, which are arguably becoming evident in Denmark's inclusion of securitization within their development strategies. This addition to Danish development strategies and prevalence in Danish discourse is a blatant contradiction to the ethos of development aid and assistance. Furthermore, Denmark falling short of its development assistance commitment in 2022 further indicates that Denmark is on its way to losing its good samaritan title despite trying to hold onto the façade.

The same theme of repetition within development assistance was also evident in the "new" strategic sector cooperation framework. As despite SSCs being a "new" tool and framework for Danish cooperations fundamentally they are driven by the same key focuses that have been in many of Denmark's previous guidelines and frameworks. Therefore, just as companies require a rebrand over time it also appears true for development approaches. As arguably for Denmark to stay relevant on the global forum of development assistance and cooperation Denmark needs to appear to be evolving within the sphere. Analysis of strategic sector cooperations indicate that this could be the case as fundamentally there has not been much change since the first bilateral technical assistance programme in 1962. However, there are signs that Denmark is trying to adapt the project management style to make a more effective and conducive framework whilst prioritizing policy reform and framework conditions in the partner country. Yet, they arguably fall short when examining the issues of challenges with balancing the private sector element, facilitating tangible local ownership and transferability of best practices. Meaning that Denmark's approaches are essentially being recycled and then

rebranded with the buzzwords of the period. However, as argued in the analysis, that does not mean that the approach lacks legitimacy or potential to meet its mandate as policy changes are essential to foster development.

Just transition could arguably be classified as one of the current buzzwords within the development field. Despite its inclusion in Danish development strategies and being a focus area in the SSC framework there is not any clear indication that the model can effectively contribute to facilitating a just transition. This is in part due to the constraints of the cooperation and limit of influence it can have on China. Therefore, it feels like the focus on a just transition is just a grandiose statement that Danish development cooperations cannot tangibly guarantee contributing to, making it somewhat a fallacy, at least within the context of Danish-Chinese cooperation. Pessimistically, it could be argued that the aforementioned sentiment is valid in a majority of cases as historically someone always bears the brunt of the impact when transitions occur making the concept feel like a fallacy. However, in order to facilitate governments trying their best it is important to rather be over ambitious than under ambitious and aim for the most desirable outcome.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the breadth and complexity of the field of study addressed in this thesis there are several topics that could be considered for further research.

Development is more than economic growth, and aid is more than poverty alleviation. In the broad literature on foreign aid and development cooperation there is an overwhelming focus on economic growth and poverty, which is rooted in history and the assumption that development understood as economic growth would lead to poverty alleviation and ultimately peace. Literature shows that this notion was developed prior to the Second World War, though it gained traction in the years following the war. Approaching aid and development with such a narrow understanding leads to evaluations of aid effectiveness being based on narrow econometrics on elements such as GNI.

The evolving understanding of poverty and what can be classified as poverty in the context of sustainable development is an interesting topic that should be subject to further research or reflection. As evident from this thesis, there has been extensive discourse pertaining to aid effectiveness, almost since foreign aid took off and it does not seem to be disappearing any time soon. In the context of the world with increasing focus on grand societal challenges such

as climate change, perhaps it would make more sense for academics and for that matter development strategies to increase its focus on alternative forms of poverty such as lack of access to clean water and energy poverty. These types of poverty are part of the broader sustainability transition and have tangible technological solutions, but there is a common understanding that the solution to this transition will not merely be rooted in technology but deep social change.

Lastly, through my work on this project I have become increasingly interested in a relatively new phenomena in development cooperation. Namely, tri-lateral cooperation in which a country of the Global North collaborates with an upper-middle income country of the Global South in development cooperation with a receiver country from the Global South. Germany is one of relatively few countries that have started on this path in cooperation with China. My hypothesis would be, that the technical expertise from the country of the Global North combined with the more relatable development pathways from the South-South element of the cooperation would increase the effectiveness of development cooperation. I would suggest that this somewhat innovative approach becomes subject to further research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aarhus Universitet. (2012, Marts 12). *Uddrag fra "En verden i forandring - strategi for dansk udviklingspolitik frem mod år 2000"*. Retrieved from danmarkshistorien: <https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/uddrag-fra-en-verden-i-forandring-strategi-for-dansk-udviklingspolitik-frem-mod-aar-2000>
- Ahlin, E. M. (2019). *Semi-structured Interviews with Expert Practitioners: Their Validity and Significant Contribution to Translational Research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Avelino, F., Grin, J., Pel, B., & Jhagroe, S. (2016, Augst 10). The politics of sustainability transitions. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, pp. 557-567.
- Bach, C. F., Olesen, T. B., Kaur-Pedersen, S., & Pedersen, J. (2008). *Idealer og Realiteter - Dansk udviklingspolitisk historie 1945-2005*. Copenhagen: Udenrigsministeriet, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag A/S .
- Béland, D., & Cox, R. (2010). *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research* . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bjørnskov, C. (2019). Types of Foreign Aid. In N. Dutta, & C. R. Williamson, *Lessons on Foreign Aid and Economic Development* (pp. 33-62). Palgrave macmillan.
- Boone, P. (1995). *Politics and the effectiveness of foreign aid*. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research .
- Boone, P. (2005). Effective Intervention: Making Aid Work. *CentrePiece - The magazine for economic performance*.
- Booth, D. (2011). Aid, Institutions and Governance: What Have We Learned? *Development Policy Review*, 29(1), 5-26.
- Bridle, R., Kitson, L., Duan, H., Sanchez, L., & Merrill, T. (2017). *At the Crossroads: Balancing te financial and social costs of coal transition in China*. Winnipeg: Global Subsidies Initiatives, International Institute for Sustainable Development.
- Broberg, M. B. (2021, February 14). *Danmark har ulandsprojekter for millioner i Kina*. Retrieved from Jyllands-Posten: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12755353/danmark-har-ulandsprojekter-for-millioner-i-kina/>
- Browning, C. S. (2007). Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42(1), 27-51.
- Brunbech, P. Y. (2014). Size, Targets and Purpose: An analysis of Danish Aid Policy and the Emerging International Spending Targets 1945-70. *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook*, 140-179.
- Brunbech, P. Y., & Olesen, T. B. (2013). The Late Front-Runner: Denmark and the ODA Percentage Question, 1960-2008. In T. B. Olesen, H. Ø. Pharø, & K. Paaskesen, *Saints and Sinners: Official Development Aid and its Dynamics in a Historical and Comparative Perspective* (pp. 89-121). Oslo: Akademika Publishing.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Burnside, C., & Dollar, D. (2000). Aid, Policies and Growth. *The American Economic Review*, 847-868.

- Cairney, P. (2012). *Understanding Public Policy: theories and issues*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Caldecott, B., Sartor, O., & Spencer, T. (2017). *Lessons from previous coal transitions - Part of the Coal Transition: Research and Dialogue on 'Future of Coal' Project*. Climate Strategie, IDDRI.
- Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism. *World Politics*, 59(3), 341-369.
- Center for Global Development. (2023). *The Commitment to Development Index 2023*. Retrieved from Center for Global Development: <https://www.cgdev.org/cdi#/>
- Chen, Y., & Li, A. (2021). Global Green New Deal: A Global South Perspective . *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, pp. 170-189.
- Collier, D. (1993). The comparative method. In A. W. Finifter, *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. Washington: American Political Science Association.
- Collier, P., & Dollar, D. (2002). Aid allocation and poverty reduction. *European Economic Review*, 1475-1500.
- Council for Development Policy. (2023, June 1). *Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy on 1 June 2023*. Retrieved from <https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/danida-transparency/danida-documents/council-for-development-policy/meeting-in-the-council-for-development-policy-on-1-june-2023>
- Council for Development Policy. (2023, June 22). *Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy on 22 June 2023*. Retrieved from <https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/danida-transparency/danida-documents/council-for-development-policy/meeting-in-the-council-for-development-policy-on-22-june-2023>
- Dadush, U. (2021). Is China A Developing Country. *Policy Brief*.
- Eggel, D., & Galvin, M. (2020, April). Multilateralism Is In Crisis - Or is it? *Global Challenges - Global Governance in Peril?*(7).
- Elgström, O., & Delputte, S. (2016). An end to Nordic exceptionalism? Europeanisation and Nordic development policies. *European Politics and Society*, 17(1), 28-41.
- Engberg-Pedersen, L. (2014). Bringing Aid Management Closer to Reality: The Experience of Danish Bilateral Development Cooperation. *Development Policy Review*, 32(1), 113-131.
- Engberg-Pedersen, L., & Fejerskov, A. M. (2018). *The transformation of Danish foreign aid - Danish Foreign Policy Review 2018*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.
- Engberg-Pedersen, L., & Fejerskov, A. M. (2021). Danish Development Cooperation: Withering Heights. In A. De Bengy Puyvallée, & K. Bjørkdahl, *Do-Gooders at the End of Aid* (pp. 123-142). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. (2023, October 10). *German Cooperation with China* . Retrieved from <https://www.bmz.de/en/countries/china>
- Fioretos, O. (2011). Historical Institutionalism in International Relations. *International Organization*, 65(2), 367-399.
- Folketinget. (2021, 17 02). § 20-spørgsmål S 947 Om ulandsbistand til Kina. Retrieved from ft.dk: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/spoergsmaal/S947/index.htm>

- Folketingstidende. (1962, March 19). *Forslag til Lov om teknisk samarbejde med udviklingslandene*. Retrieved from Lov nr. 94 af 19. marts 1962: https://www.folketingstidende.dk/samling/19611/lovforslag/L2/19611_L2_som_vedtaget.pdf
- Fuxuan, S. (2023, June 5). *China Is Still a Developing Country*. Retrieved from China Daily: <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202306/05/WS647d2f86a31033ad3f7ba5f0.html>
- Geels, F. W. (2011, February 18). The multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions: Responses to seven criticisms. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* , pp. 24-40.
- Geels, F. W., Hekkert, M. P., & Jacobsson, S. (2008, September 5). The dynamics of sustainable innovation journeys. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, pp. 521-536.
- Guthrie, G. (2010). *Basic Research Methods: An Entry to Social Science Research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Hall, P. A., & Taylor, R. C. (1996). Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*, 44(5), 986-957.
- Heffron, R. J. (2021). What is the 'Just Transition'? In *Achieving a Just Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy* (pp. 9-19). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heffron, R. J., & McCauley, D. (2018). What is the 'just transition?'. *Geoforum*, pp. 74-77.
- Heldgaard, J. (2023, October 8). Det skyldes ikke kun teknik, men også politik, at Danmark i 2022 røg ud af det gode bistands-selskab. *Globalnyt*. Retrieved from <https://globalnyt.dk/det-skyldes-ikke-kun-teknik-men-ogsaa-politik-at-danmark-i-2022-roeg-ud-af-det-gode-selskab/>
- Heldgaard, J. (2023, August 16). *Udviklingspolitisk Råd sparker sundhedssamarbejder til hjørne*. Retrieved from Globalnyt: <https://globalnyt.dk/udviklingspolitisk-raad-sparker-sundhedssamarbejder-til-hjoerne/>
- Hu, D., Jiao, J., Tang, Y., Han, X., & Sun, H. (2021, February). The effect of global value chain position on green technology innovation and efficiency: From the perspective of environmental regulation. *Ecological Indicators*.
- IDE-Jetro. (2022, March). *Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization*. Retrieved from China in Africa: https://www.ide.go.jp/English/Data/Africa_file/Manualreport/cia_10.html
- Jackson, R. (1969). *A study of the capacity of the United Nations development systems*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Jakobsen, P. (2019). Policy-fællesskaber, standard- og krisestyringsprocedurer: detoversete institutionelle grundlag for den brede opbakning til Danmarks aktivistiske udenrigspolitik. *Politica*, 51(2), 139-167.
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.-M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* , pp. 2954-2965.
- Kanwit, G. (2023, August 28). *Is China Still A Developing Country?* Retrieved from VOA China News: <https://www.voanews.com/a/is-china-still-a-developing-country/7244652.html>
- Kaufmann, J. (1971). The Capacity of the United Nations Development Programme: The Jackson Report: Comment. *International Organization vol 25, no. 4*, pp. 938-949.

- Kennedy, S. (2011). *Beyond the Middle Kingdom: Comparative Perspectives on China's Capitalist Transformation*. Stanford University Press; 1st edition.
- Kickert, W. J., & Van der Mee, F.-B. H. (2011). Small, Slow, and Gradual Reform: What can. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 34(8), 475-485.
- Kjær, A. (2022). The Paradigm Shift of Danish Development Policy (1990–2020). *Forum for Development Studies*, 49(3), 345-371.
- Kjær, A., Pettersson, J., Tjønneland, E., Karhu, M., & Lanki, J. (2022). Diverging Like-Mindedness? Development Policy Among the Nordics. *Forum for Development Studies*, 49(3), 319-344.
- Lancaster, C. (2007). *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lancaster, C. (2009). Sixty years of foreign aid - what have we learned? *International Journal*, 799-810.
- Lawler, P. (2007). Janus-Faced Solidarity: Danish Internationalism Reconsidered. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42(1), 101-126.
- Lawrence, S. V., & Martin, M. F. (2012). *Understanding China's Political System*. Congressional Research Service.
- Loorbach, D., Frantzeskaki, N., & Avelino, F. (2017, July 10). Sustainability Transitions Research: Transforming Science and Practice for Societal Change. *Annual Reviews*, pp. 599-626.
- Lovtidende C. (2019). *Bekendtgørelse om overenskomster angående dansk udviklingssamarbejde*. Udenrigsministeriet.
- Lovtidende C. (2021). *Bekendtgørelse om overenskomster angående dansk udviklingssamarbejde*. Udenrigsministeriet.
- March, J., & Olsen, J. (1984). The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life. *The American Political Science Review*, 78(3), 734-749.
- MFA File No. 2017-39186. (2023, October 11). *Strategic Sector Cooperation in the Food Sector between Denmark and China, Phase 2*. Retrieved from um.dk: <https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/danida-transparency/danida-documents/grants-below-dkk-43-million>
- MFA File No. 2018-46817. (2023, October 11). *Strategic Sector Cooperation on Clean Heating between Denmark and the People's Republic of China*. Retrieved from um.dk: <https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/danida-transparency/danida-documents/grants-below-dkk-43-million>
- Midgley, J. (2014). *Social Development: Theory and Practice*. 55 City Road: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2023, October 10). *Denmark in China*. Retrieved from kina.um.dk: <https://kina.um.dk/en>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2023, 08 10). *Global Climate Action Strategy*. Retrieved from um.dk: <https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/new-climate-action-strategy>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2023, October 10). *Green Cooperation*. Retrieved from <https://kina.um.dk/en/about-denmark/green-diplomacy/green-cooperation>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2023, May 30). *Kan lille Danmark påvirke verdens største CO2-udleverer?* Retrieved from <https://um.dk/om-os/ministrene/minister-for-udviklingssamarbejde>

og-global-klimapolitik/minister-for-udviklingssamarbejde-og-global-klimapolitik-dan-joergensen/kan-lille-danmark-paavirke-verdens-stoerste-co2-udledere

Ministry of Foreign Affairs DANIDA. (2023, October 11). *Grants Below DKK 43 million*. Retrieved from <https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/danida-transparency/danida-documents/grants-below-dkk-43-million>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (2015). *Evaluation of Capacity Development in Danish Development Assistance*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (2021a). *Danish Strategic Cooperation, SSC - Guiding Principles*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (2021b). *The World We Share: Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (2023, October 10). *The embassy as a green front line mission*. Retrieved from Denmark in China: <https://kina.um.dk/en/about-denmark/green-diplomacy/the-embassy-as-green-front-line-mission>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (n.d.). *Strategic Sector Cooperation - More Denmark in the World*. Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark - Trade Council: <https://thetradecouncil.dk/en/services/growth/strategic-sector-cooperation>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023, August 18). *Green Joint Work Programme between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark*. Retrieved from https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202308/t20230818_11128930.html

Minsitry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA. (2023, September 18). *History*. Retrieved from [um.dk: https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/history](https://um.dk/en/danida/about-danida/history)

Newton, K., & Van Deth, J. (2010). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Odén, B. (2011). *The Africa policies of Nordic countries and the erosion of the Nordic aid model: a comparative study*. Nordic Africa Institute.

OECD. (2011, July). *Unlocking the potential of South-South Cooperation*. Retrieved from Task Team on South-South Cooperation: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/TT-SSC%20Policy%20Recommendations.pdf>

OECD. (2021). *PEER REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES - A snapshot of Denmark's development co-operation*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD DAC . (2023, October 10). *DAC List of ODA Recipients*. Retrieved from [oecd.org: https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm](https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm)

OECD, DAC. (2003). *Development co-operation Review*. Retrieved from [www.oecd.org: https://www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/2956543.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/2956543.pdf)

Olsen, T. B., & Pedersen, J. (2010). On the side of the angels: altruism in Danish development aid 1960–2005. *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 17(6), 881-903.

- Pickvance, C. G. (2001, March). Four varieties of comparative analysis. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, pp. 7-28.
- Progressive International. (2022, December 12). *Declaration on the Establishment of New International Economic Order*. Retrieved from <https://progressive.international/blueprint/b262a535-7fcd-449e-94b8-73590c3db6a7-declaration-on-the-establishment-of-a-new-international-economic-order/en>
- Ridder, H. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. *Business Research*, 281-305.
- Riker, W. H. (1980). Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions. *American Political Science Review*, 74(2), 432-446.
- Rosemberg, A. (2010). Building a Just Transition: The linkages between climate change and employment. *International Journal of Labour research*, 125-161.
- Schmidt, V. A. (2008). Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 303-326.
- Schmidt, V. A. (2010). Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth 'new institutionalism'. *European Political Science Review*, 2(1), 1-25.
- Selbervik, H., & Nygaard, K. (2006). *Nordic exceptionalism in development assistance? Aid policies and the major donors: The Nordic countries*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Skrzydło, A. (2011). Danish Development Aid – Case Study of an Effective Instrument Complementing Foreign Policy. *Yearbook of Polish European Studies*, 123-145.
- Smith, S. (2017). *Just Transition - A Report for the OECD*. Just Transition Centre.
- Stewart, D. W. (1993). *Secondary Research: Information sources and methods (2 ed.)*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Stokke, O. (2019). *International Development Assistance. Policy Drivers and Performance*. Oslo: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tarp, F. (2010). Aid, Growth and Development. In G. Mavrotas, *Foreign aid for Development: Issues, Challenges and the new Agenda* (pp. 20-54). Oxford University Press.
- Thelen, K. (1999). Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2(1), 369-404.
- Ulbæk, S., & Nøhr, H. (2014). Evaluation of Danish development assistance – experiences and new approaches. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 6(4), 451-460.
- UNFCCC. (2015). *Paris Agreement*. Retrieved from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf
- United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>
- United Nations. (2021). *Theme report on Energy Transition - Towards the achievement of SDG 7 and net-zero emissions*. United Nations.

- United Nations. (2023, September 18). *The Sustainable Development Agenda*. Retrieved from United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda-retired/>
- United Nations. (2023, October 8). *United Nations Committee for Development Policy*. Retrieved from un.org: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-excerpt-2023-1.pdf>
- United Nations. (2023, September 18). *United Nations History*. Retrieved from un.org/about us: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un/1951-1960>
- von Billerbeck, S. (2020). Sociological institutionalism. In K. Oksamytna, & J. Karlsrud, *United Nations Peace Operations and International Relations Theory* (pp. 91-110). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Wang, S., He, Y., & Song, M. (2021, January 1). Global value chains, technological progress and environmental pollution: Inequality towards developing countries. *Journal of Environmental Management*.
- Wang, X., & Lo, K. (2021, December). Just Transition: A conceptual review. *Energy Research and Social Science*.
- Wohlgemuth, L. (2008). Introduction; The history of Danish Aid: Altruism and Self-Interest. *Forum for Development Studies*, pp. 353-370.
- Wolf, C., Wang, X., & Warner, E. (2010). Foreign Aid Literature Review. In *China's Foreign Aid and Government-sponsored investment activities* (pp. 3-10). RAND Corporation.
- World Bank. (2023, October 10). *China Overview*. Retrieved from The World Bank in China : <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>
- World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford University Press.
- Zielińska, K. (2016). Development Diplomacy. Development Aid as a Part of Public Diplomacy in the Pursuit of Foreign Policy Aims: Theoretical and Practical Considerations. *Historia i Polityka*, 16(23), 9-26.