

# **Technocracy and the Market**

## **World Bank Group Technical Assistance and the Rise of Neoliberalism**

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September 2013

A Thesis Submitted for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of The Australian National University.

# **Declaration**

This thesis in its entirety is my own original work. While members of academic staff and fellow PhD candidates gave feedback, the materials included, the argument constructed, and the ideas presented are my own.

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24 September 2013

# Acknowledgements

To John Minns,

For supervising and guiding the construction of my thesis.

To April Biccum, Sean Burges, and Jim George,

For reading and commenting on my ideas.

To Alastair Greig and Kate Lee-Koo,

For revealing the joys of an academic life.

To Tom Chodor, Guy Emerson, and Brendan McCaffrie,

For inspiring me and for being there to look up to.

To Mum, Dad, and Inga,

For encouraging my every step and for loving my every fault.

To Angela Spence,

For sharing this tumultuous adventure.

To Natalie Peters-Jones,

For being awesome.

# **Abstract**

This thesis analyses the provision of technical assistance by the World Bank Group (the Group) from 1946 to 2010. Technical assistance concerns the transmission of knowledge and practices to encourage economic growth. Starting from the ontological position that “development” is merely a series of normative positions that change over time and that are dependent upon the worldview of the observer, it argues that Group technical assistance has helped to construct, project, and legitimise particular development “truths”.

Drawing upon literature from within the discipline of International Political Economy, this analysis regards technical assistance as a form of power whereby exercising actors are able to persuade others and define structures in such a way as to make particular understandings appear as common sense. The use of “soft” technical assistance to build institutional and human resource capacity during the neoliberal era – built through policy reform, management selection, and personnel training – became a means to persuade recipients of the alleged legitimacy of market-led development.

An institutional study, this work contextualises the growth and evolution of Group technical assistance in terms of crises in the world economy, shifting intellectual movements in academic and policy circles, and changes in the mission, organisational structure, and leadership of the Group. The Group is thus a shaper of and is shaped by the mainstream development discourse – the orthodox conceptualisation of the economic, political, social, and environmental “improvement” of developing countries. The thesis concludes that Group technical assistance has been able to reinforce particular “truths” through its allegedly scientific, objective, and value-neutral nature dissuading challenges to the prevailing orthodoxy. This thesis contributes to academic discussion by analysing the persuasive ability of Group technical assistance to convince recipients of the necessity of accepting and adopting particular development “truths” that are far from objective or value-neutral.

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# Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
DPL	Development Policy Loan
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EDI	Economic Development Institute
ESW	Economic and Sector Work
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIAS	Foreign Investment Advisory Service
GDN	Global Development Network
GDLN	Global Development Learning Network
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDA	International Development Association
IDF	Institutional Development Fund
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPAnet	Investment Promotion Agency Network
IPE	International Political Economy
KBE	Knowledge-Based Economy
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
NLTA	Non-Lending Technical Assistance
OED	Operations Evaluation Department
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAS	Policy and Advisory Services Department
PPI	Private Sector Provision of Infrastructure
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
PPIAF	Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RIPE	Review of International Political Economy

SAL	Structural Adjustment Loan
SDR	Special Drawing Right
SECAL	Sectoral Adjustment Loan
SPPF	Special Project Preparation Facility
TAL	Technical Assistance Loan
TATF	Technical Assistance Trust Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSF	United Nations Special Fund
WBI	World Bank Institute