Photo Credit: Renard Teipelke

Urban Development Consultants in International Development Projects

Report

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Abstract

This report is an initial input into the discussion of how urban development consultants perform and perceive their work in international development projects. The key premise is that urban development in the Global South is particularly characterized by international development organizations. And their work is specifically executed and, thus, influenced by urban development consultants. Understanding more about these consultants can inform international development organizations' project design, relationship with consultants and project counterparts, and their increased effectiveness in implementing urban development projects. It is this need for better understanding which informed the design of this research. Instead of working with typologies, one step back was taken to get an original perspective onto the actors in focus. Based on an online questionnaire with urban development consultants in international development projects, the topic was analyzed along the following guiding questions:

- Who are 'the' consultants in urban development projects in international development?
- How do urban development consultants approach and execute their work?
- What role do other stakeholders play in their work? How do urban development consultants perceive these stakeholders?
- What role does knowledge play in their work? Where do urban development consultants get it from? How do they share it?
- Why do urban development consultants work in international development?
- How do urban development consultants perceive their work/work context? How do they relate to these?

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Disclaimer

This research has not been supported through any funds or grants and has been conducted by the author in his own personal capacity. The opinions expressed in this report are the author's own and do not reflect the view of any of the institutions or organizations referred to in the report. The further use and reference to this report's findings shall keep in mind and reflect that the research has been based on a single, limited set of data.

The author has been working on consulting contracts for different assignments, including those in urban development projects, during the preparation of this report. Corresponding assigning entities were the German Development Corporation GIZ and the Asian Development Bank ADB. The author communicated his research to his colleagues and supervisors in these institutions. The author inquired and received support with regard to the forwarding of the questionnaire, advice and discussions on the research, and the opportunity to present initial findings specific to ADB as part of an ADB Urban Sector Group workshop in August 2016.

The author received co-sponsoring by the Urban Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers (RGS/IBG) that partially covered the participation fee for the RGS/IBG Annual International Conference in August/September 2016. The author received feedback from academic colleagues and the audience when presenting his research findings at this conference.

Foreword and Acknowledgements

This report is meant as an initial input into the discussion of how urban development consultants perform and perceive their work in international development projects. As such, the report provides a particular perspective on the international development sector, focused on urban projects. With existing research on the area of concern being scarce and previous studies on urban development consultants in international development projects being nearly absent, this report can only be considered as a first step to illuminate a multitude of both research and practical questions around the interrelation between consultants, international development organizations, and project counterparts, such as local governments and civil society groups.

As the research has not been supported through any funds or grants and has been conducted by the author in his own personal capacity – in addition to a full-time consulting job – the analysis and reporting is limited in scope. Instead of claiming a full picture of the related topics, the objective of the report is to encourage and enrich a more engaged discussion about urban development consultants' work and to contribute to an increasingly growing field of academic research on the role of consultancies in urban development in general.

The author would like to acknowledge the support of several esteemed colleagues. The survey was forwarded to various (former) individual consultants and colleagues at a large number of international organizations and consulting companies, as well as research institutes and government agencies. They also shared the survey with other organizations and individuals. Without such broad sharing of the survey, hardly any results would have been obtained. Special thanks goes to the respondents of the survey itself, as they invested about half an hour of their working time to respond to the many questions.

The opportunity to present at an Asian Development Bank (ADB) Urban Sector Group workshop in August 2016 provided valuable inputs, critical feedback, and a lively discussion amongst practitioners. Individual conversations with Joris van Etten, Ramola Naik Singru, and Aldrin Plaza informed the framing of the research questions and the inquiry into additional aspects of the topic.

The author would like to thank Anne Vogelpohl and Christopher Hurl for convening a session on "Consultants, Urban Governance and the Politics of Expertise" at the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers (RGS/IBG) Annual International Conference in August/September 2016. They provided important feedback and ideas for future research, as did academic colleagues and the audience during the corresponding session. The RGS/IBG Annual International Conference has to be appreciated for bringing together a multitude of different sub-disciplines each year and also providing a fruitful interface for discussing academic and practical aspects of important topics – particularly those emerging as being of increasing relevance in the present and near future. The author would like to thank the RGS/IBG Urban Geography Research Group for co-sponsoring one of three conference days for the author.

While the topic of international development consultants in urban development gains importance from a research point of view, as well as a political point of view, it is mostly treated as a kind of 'meta issue' in the everyday international development work, where tight deadlines and humongous deliverables challenge the reflection on how 'the job' is actually performed, by whom, and based on what motivation and background. The author hopes that this report provides an interesting perspective and accessible findings for both researchers and practitioners to take further the analysis, discussion, and also improvement of urban development consultants' work in international development projects.

Chapter 1.   Introduction

With urbanization being spatially concentrated in developing and emerging economies, studying urban development requires a focus on towns and cities in Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Correspondingly, the consulting industry with its various specializations in engineering, planning, economics, and policy advice is increasingly tailoring its services and developing new products for urban areas in the Global South. At the same time, it has to be recognized that such advisory services in these regions are characterized by the dominant role of international development assistance.

The Global North shows a picture of fairly well capacitated public institutions that are only somewhat and mostly indirectly advised on urban development by international development actors (also including regional institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development). On the other hand, the role of private sector consultancy in the Global North is increasing.

To a certain extent, countries in the Global South have a similar setting as far as the more relevant economic and political hubs are concerned, such as Shanghai in China or Panama City in Panama. But beyond these hubs and dominating megacities, the role of secondary cities is much more crucial. It is in these small- and medium-sized locations that international private sector consultancies are mostly absent, public institutions are under-capacitated, and international development organizations are the thriving forces in urban development and related advisory activities.

The handful of master-planning projects by leading global consultancies can hardly be compared to the myriad of urban development projects by multilateral development banks, United Nations programs, or bilateral development organizations. A rough count of such urban development projects from 2000 to 2015 reveals close to 1,000 World Bank projects in the urban sector; about 400 technical assistance projects by the Asian Development Bank; more than 100 larger urban projects by UN-Habitat; or, for example, about 61 ongoing urban sector advisory projects by the German Development Corporation GIZ. It can be debated what denotes an "urban sector project" and which infrastructure sectors and services are included. Still, with advisory and assistance activities of international organizations ranging in the thousands over just 15 years, it is clear that their work leaves a mark on urban development in hundreds (if not thousands) of small- and medium-sized cities, particularly in the Global South.

While this setting is already worth a deeper analysis with regard to the agendas, thematic foci, as well as approaches and methodologies of different international development organizations, another feature is often less well known outside of 'the industry': A predominant majority of the above-listed urban sector projects are designed, managed, and monitored by international development organizations themselves – however, they are most often not implemented by their staff. Or to phrase it differently: The hands-on groundwork and the more specific technical work is usually performed by international development consultants (either individuals or companies).

As the following Chapter 2 will outline, some research exist on international development work and consultancy advisory in the urban sector. But the role played by urban development consultants in international development projects – and likely also by other sector-specific development consultants – is not yet recognized by an equivalent research agenda. At the same time, actors in international development are probably aware of consultants' role, but the implications of their dominance is not yet sufficiently analyzed and discussed with regard to how international development organizations design and implement their work.

The key premise of this report, therefore, is that urban development in the Global South is particularly characterized by international development organizations. And their work is specifically executed and, thus, influenced by urban development consultants. Understanding more about these consultants will inform international development organizations' project design, relationship with consultants and project counterparts, and their increased effectiveness in implementing successful urban development projects (dependent on whoever defines "success").

The report is structured in nine chapters as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Report Structure

| Chapter 1: Introduction			
Chapter 2: Research Perspective	Chapter 3: Research Approach		Chapter 4: Research Methodology
Chapter 5: Who Are 'the' Consultants?	Chapter 6: Consultants' Work Approaches	Chapter 7: Consultants' Perceptions	Chapter 8: Consultants' Motivation
Chapter 9: Conclusion			

Source: Author.

Chapter 2.   Research Perspective

Existing research related to this report can be clustered along four research areas: urban development consultants; international development; urban development; and management consultants (see Figure 2.1). Overall, the literature is not the strongest in interlinking two or more of these areas. The strongest interface can be found between international development and urban development research due to the increasing focus on urban development in the Global South, which – linked to the predominance of international development organizations – also relates to aspects of "development" in light of post-colonialism, globalization, or neo-liberalization.

Comparative research is not yet readily available for the interface of urban development consultants and management consultants, which is partly due to the fairly recent emergence of urban advisory services amongst consultancies and also due to the disciplinary distance between urban planning studies and management/business studies. This report does not yet tackle this research gap, but focuses on bridging the literature from the area of urban development consultants to urban development in international development (upper triangle in Figure 2.1) by providing empirical findings and conclusions on the topic.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Research Perspective
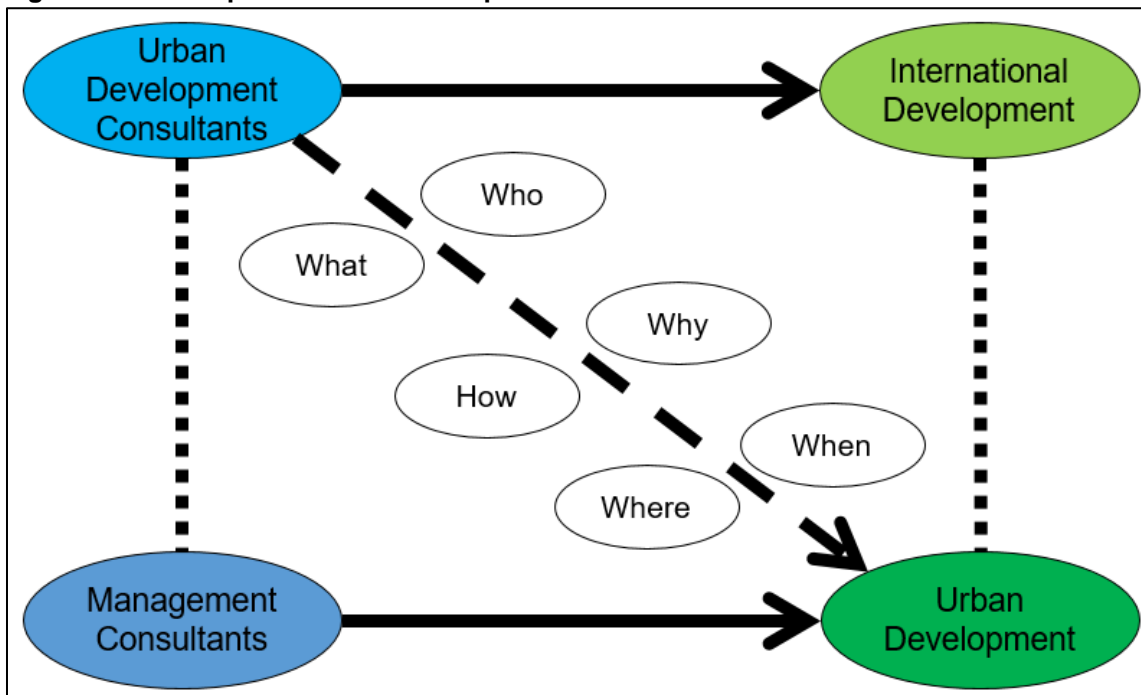
Source: Author.

While this report focuses on the empirical and practical aspects of the topic and does not claim to be a research/academic article, a snapshot of existing contributions in the four research areas is provided in the following list of illustrative studies for future research (in alphabetical order):

Diallo, Amadou, and Denis Thuillier. 2004. The Success Dimensions of International Development Projects: the Perceptions of African Project Coordinators. International Journal of Project Management: 22. P. 19-31.

Diallo and Thuillier in their 2004 article provide one of the few studies on how success in international development projects is perceived by those who are part of the implementing team – in their study: the project coordinators of development aid projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based on a paper questionnaire they provide a quantitative analysis on the importance that project coordinators ascribe to different aspects for a project's perceived success. While impact

ranks surprisingly low, it is management dimensions as per the terms of reference that rank high:

"That is to say, a project is usually considered a success if its implementation complies with the usual constraints of time, cost and the client's terms of reference or "quality". Here one can identify the influence of the construction and engineering sectors; sectors upon which project management has structured itself for the past centuries. In these professions, success is judged primarily through the assessment of the technical quality of outputs and through the evaluation of the management performance whose dimensions are objective, perfectly defined and well-accepted. The classical project manager does not view his project beyond the scope of his professional duties and responsibilities." (21)

Also, Diallo and Thuillier position project coordinators (often civil servants of the counterpart government) as having to cater to different clients at the same time – an aspect which also applies to consultants. When judging about the success rates of international development projects, the authors conclude that it is not so much technical concerns as political factors that impact on the outcome:

"To put it briefly, the study confirms that each stakeholder assesses project success on the basis of evaluation dimensions that fit within his own agenda or within the interests of the group he represents." (29)

Fforde, Adam. 2015. What Might International Development Assistance Be Able to Tell Us About Contemporary "Policy Government" in Developed Countries?. Administration & Society. P. 1-30.

Fforde's 2015 article provides a critical inspection of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) in international development assistance. Relevant to this report here is the discussion about the multitude of actors, perspectives, agendas, and solutions that juxtaposes the "'single truth' knowledge" (1) of the LFA. Instead of providing open pathways for project implementers to find the most suitable approaches and solutions to achieve a project's intended outcome, the LFA preemptively assumes how things will have to go. As a result, experts, such as consultants, are not asked to provide critical feedback (for instance in the form of questioning), but to provide definite answers to make assumed cause-effect relationships work.

Godfrey, Martin, Chan Sophal, Toshiyasu Kato, Long Vou Piseth, Pon Dorina, Tep Saravy, Tia Savora, and So Sovannarith. 2002. Technical Assistance and Capacity Development in an Aid-Dependent Economy: The Experience of Cambodia. World Development: 30-3. P. 355-373.

Godfrey et al. (2002) offer a perspective on development assistance from the government's side when studying the aid-dependent economy of Cambodia. They criticize the dominating donor role in identifying, designing, and implementing much of development projects, thereby providing little to the sustainability of various sector- or theme-specific development objectives. While their main focus is on the conflict between donor-driven technical assistance with lack of counterpart ownership of the projects and insufficient counterpart resources to ensure fully committed implementation, Godfrey et al. also point toward another interesting phenomenon impacting on the role of consultants in international development projects:

"Other elements of this aid-related disease include weakening state bureaucracies by siphoning off scarce talent (similar to the resource movement effect of the Dutch disease) and hindering the development of administrative capacity by implementing projects that governments would have otherwise undertaken. The hypothesized connection, then, between aid dependence and lack of capacity development via TA is through weak ownership and underfunding." (357)

What this means is that much needed government staff is attracted to international development projects, often with their additional project implementation units (for instance due to salary supplementation through allowances, fees, and other payments) further weakening the actual public sector apparatus. Furthermore, with the experience gained in such projects and in light of comparatively higher income prospects, the national experts eventually leave government and engage in private sector activities, not rarely as national development consultants for similar projects they have previously worked in. While at least the correspondingly developed capacity is not extracted from the country, but remains within its economy, it stills extracts it from the public sector:

"Of course, former counterparts who leave government, or remain but work only part-time, are not a loss to Cambodia. A social cost/benefit analysis would record a benefit to the economy. But it is presumably not the main intention of TA [technical assistance] to prepare government officers for nongovernment work." (369)

Another hypothesis could be that the national consultants' perception and motivation to work in international development is also impacted by their previous experience as under-paid government officials seeking a better life based on higher remuneration in international development projects.

Gow, David D. 1991. Collaboration in Development Consulting: Stooges, Hired Guns, or Musketeers?. Human Organization: 50-1. P. 1-15.

Gow's 1991 research makes a valuable contribution to this report and the broader research topic. Although the study could easily be seen as a now outdated perspective on development assistance, it still touches on a variety of aspects that inform a better understanding of consultants in such projects. Gow – having worked in international development projects himself – reflects on cases from Panama, Peru, and Zaire (now: Democratic Republic of Congo). He refers to the critique of project-based international development assistance that lacks proper understanding of local conditions, is not effectively contextualized in the political economy of host countries, and goes against continuity due to time-bound activities that are often too short to sufficiently build capacities and institutions. Gow also critically characterizes the design of development projects, which propose model solutions that – from the outset – exclude other alternative approaches or solutions. He explains how consultants are limited in their critical engagement with projects, as results have to be delivered:

"(…) there may be too much at stake: reputation, prestige, credibility, authority, and resources. But more important, admission of errors may imply that the values and commitment that led to them were misplaced. How much uncertainty are people prepared to live with?" (2)

Gow also highlights positive aspects of consulting work in international development when describing the conflictual productiveness of different sector-specialists having to collaborate in teams. Methodologies from different disciplines have to be made useful to other fields. Different experts encourage each other's thinking and solution orientation. Nevertheless, conflicts and divisions remain, and dependent on the more or less extreme conditions of the assignments, project environments will put further stress on individual consultants' resilience against internal team conflicts and their own professional and personal performance.

Based on this, Gow provided an insightful description of different consultants and their personalities, backgrounds, and motivations. Building up on Honadle et al. 1983 work, Gow further elaborates the consultant types (9-10): i) performers (short-term technical quality over long-term skills transfer); ii) substitutes (reliable routine project inputs to be taken over by locals as soon as possible); iii) teachers (long-term skills transfer for local capacitation); iv) mobilizers (policy reform advocacy and advisory with focus on institutions and political context); and v)

scapegoating gadflies (locally uncommitted, less effective equivalents of 'jetsetters'). Gow goes further in discussing how these types of consultants can appear as musketeers, hired guns, or stooges (10-11), with a revealing conclusion on the quite common underperformance by certain consultants:

"(…) no problem finding subsequent work, in spite of the fact that their prospective employers were fully informed about their previous records. (…) The choice of a technician who has been used before, often irrespective of the results achieved, removes the element of the unknown. In the same way, the choice of a project model that has been used before makes the design that much easier. Scratch an anthropologist and you will find a missionary, but scratch a consultant and you will find a hired gun." (11)

Gow discusses the different responsibilities of consultants in international development projects by clearly stating:

"Like it or not, the first responsibility of the consultant is to keep the clients happy and provide them with what was agreed upon in the contract. Doing so does not mean that the consultant has to stop there: there is nothing that says he cannot give the clients more than they asked for. The problem is how to convince the clients to take seriously uncomfortable knowledge – they do so by a combination of diplomacy, negotiation, compromise, and perseverance. And if one is too persevering, one will not be invited back. (…) I horrified some of the more sensitive team members by emphasizing that our primary responsibility was to satisfy the client, a demand that appeared to some to verge on prostitution. But a private development consulting company is also a business, dependent on generating more business in order to stay solvent." (11)

One can discuss in how far these descriptions still hold true about a quarter century later, but they reveal important aspects when analyzing consultants' perceptions and motivations. Seeing the relation between consultant and client also helps to assess more reflectively the outcome of international development projects vis-à-vis judgments about consultants. While it is informative to critically evaluate their work in international development assistance, their inputs have to be seen as deeply entangled in their business-based relation to their project client, their multiple other relations and dependencies with other stakeholders (government counterparts, project-affected people, etc.), and the broader context of development project design, client organization agenda, and host country political economy.

Kerr, Ron. 2008. Transferring New Public Management to the Periphery: UK International Development Organizations Applying Project Technology to China. International Studies of Management and Organization: 38-4. P. 58-77.

Kerr's 2008 research on the transfer of New Public Management into international development assistance of the United Kingdom in China makes the connection between policy and development studies. He hints at how the "projectization" (67, 73) together with the logical framework approach has changed the style of project implementation to a way of reporting procedures where more attention is given to the assignment of accountability to different project actors than the actual content delivered, increasing the pressure on the project implementers to focus on proper reporting that shows how policy objectives are achieved.

Kipping, Matthias, and Christopher Wright. 2012. Consultants in Context: Global Dominance, Societal Effect, and the Capitalist System. Chapter 8.

Kipping has provided various contributions to the study of management consultants in a globalizing work context and economy. For instance, Kipping and Wright's 2012 article juxtaposes the dominating role of North-American style consultancies with their distribution to different world regions and forms of resistance against that style. As a result, it would be an

incomplete or overly simplified picture to assume that United States consultancies are 'ruling' their global sector. They are in certain regards dominating actors, but differences with regard to experience, approaches, organizational set-ups, and questions around legitimacy in advisory work have been emerging (8). Therefore, there cannot be a discussion about 'the consultants', based on the North-American stereotype. Much devolution and regional characterization can be found. Written sources are insufficient to understand how consultants work as their practice is very much a project-based interpretation and local adaptation of perceived and/or promoted global good practice.

Künkel, Jenny. 2015. Urban Policy Mobilities: Theoretische Grenzen und Rekonzeptualisierungen. Sub\Urban – Zeitschrift für Kritische Stadtforschung: 3-3. P. 75-98.

Although it goes beyond this report's focus, Künkel's 2015 article is illustrative of the heated theoretical debate about policy mobilities. Contributions such as hers provide a critical discussion about the potentials and limits of policy mobility research in light of other theoretical approaches and perspectives on the aspect of how, by whom, and in which contexts policy is developed, transferred, and adapted.

Larner, Wendy, and Nina Laurie. 2010. Travelling Technocrats, Embodied Knowledges: Globalising Privatisation in Telecoms and Water. Geoforum: 41. P. 218-226.

Larner and Laurie's 2010 research on "travelling technocrats" provides a more ethnographic perspective on where development consultants come from and why they engage in their (new) work. With the historic backdrop of public infrastructure privatization in the United Kingdom and New Zealand in the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, engineers of previously public companies faced a situation in which their expertise or their position became redundant and was not needed anymore, as their mid-level status made them either too low for managerial roles or too high for generic maintenance roles. The authors draw a very rich picture of the concerned engineer consultants:

"Moreover, just as with earlier movements under colonialism and developmentalism, engineers involved in globalizing privatization processes face profound personal and professional challenges. While they may be working in the same sector, and even doing similar jobs, inevitably travelling involves negotiating unfamiliarity. However, unlike the relatively fixed frameworks of the past, in which engineers became specialists in particular regions, today's travelling engineers are more likely to have careers that involve them being ongoingly mobile, negotiating repeated shifts between public and private sectors, infrastructure and industry frameworks, economic and social ambitions. The privatization process also positions travelling engineers in new ways; as entrepreneurial subjects representing the vanguard of modernity (…). (…), many of them may not have willingly chosen their new career paths." (220)

These "travelling technocrats" made – willingly or unwillingly – a new living for themselves in international development work and they could base their new role on a mixture of professional expertise, personal public sector experience, and the perceived expert history of their countries in the telecommunications and water sectors (223). Larner and Laurie explain how these engineers act as consultants with a certain authority in their respective field, transferring practices and policies from their (previous) home country to other regions. However, it is not just Anglo- or North-American style that dominates the knowledge, work approaches, and politics of international development consulting. There is a diversity with "multiple actors, multiple geographies and multiple translations" (225) that requires a qualitative study of individual consultant biographies to understand about whom the research is actually talking about.

McCann, Eugene, Ananya Roy, and Kevin Ward. 2013. Assembling/Worlding Cities. P. 1-16.

In a joint article in 2013, McCann together with Roy and Ward investigate the interlinkages between the policy mobility literature with regard to the assemblage of urban policies and the worlding cities literature with regard to the role of cities in the Global South in a global network of different forms of global and globalized cities – not just characterized and dominated by Global North examples. Their argument lends to this report a useful perspective of seeing the analysis of urban development consultants in international development projects not only going into the direction of their project cities in developing countries. Instead, there are both – and actually even multiple – directions, and consultants, the projects, as well as project client organizations are influenced by urbanization features in the Global South.

McCann, Eugene. 2011. Urban Policy Mobilities and Global Circuits of Knowledge: Toward a Research Agenda. Annals of the Association of American Geographers: 101. P. 107-130.

McCann's urban policy mobility perspective on how knowledge in the form of urban development policies and practices, etc. circulates from one place to another and is changed during the transfer by its transfer agents already notes the role of private consultancies in "shaping flows of knowledge" (2011: 108). Instead of just identifying a policy in place B adapted from place A, McCann asks who transfers these policies, how these processes are characterized, which policies or practices are transferred, and how they are taken apart and re-assembled (111). Although the connotation of a "global policy consultocracy" (114) can also be seen in a more varied light, McCann rightly identifies consultants' role and potential power:

"The mobility of these consultants and their tendency to gather information on best practices from various places to bolster their own specific recommendations makes them particularly powerful conduits of information among far-flung and, in many cases, quite different cities." (114)

He also hints toward the role of international organizations and consultants' motivation:

"(…) the attractiveness of adopting readymade, quick-fix, off-the-shelf policies from other jurisdictions or from private consultants. This 'fast policy transfer' (Peck and Theodore 2001, 429) is also facilitated by international organizations that encourage or force the adoption of certain policy models (Peet 2002). These structural conditions are coupled with the rise of cadres of policy consultants whose activities are motivated by the need to gain contracts, by considerations of professional reputation, and by the belief that they can help improve cities." (121)

Going beyond the rather theoretical and broad argument by McCann, this report attempts to illuminate if individual consultants are indeed motivated by these or other aspects.

Parker, Gavin, Emma Street, Mike Raco, and Sonia Freire-Trigo. 2016. In Planning We Trust? Public Interest and Private Delivery in a Co-Managed Planning System. Journal of the Town and Country Planning Association: 85 (5). P. 181-188.

Parker et al. provide a recent, 2016, study with highly relevant insights on the relation between local government planning and private consultants in light of a privatization agenda and reforms to the planning system in England. Although their work is not focused on international development projects, it very much asks similar questions about how private consultants approach and perform their advisory work in urban development, and how this influences the relationship, authority and accountability of the various actors in the planning process with regard to processes, content, and decision-making. Parker et al. refrain from glorifying the past, as planning approaches and practices were not necessarily better before consultants were broadly engaged in the process. It is, however, crucial to more closely study the new setting of

consultants as co-producers of "mongrel governance" and question attempts of differentiating technical and political aspects in the new planning advisory context.

Reihlen, Markus, and Natalia Nikolova. 2010. Knowledge Production in Consulting Teams. Scandinavian Journal of Management: 26. P. 279-289.

Reihlen and Nikolova's 2010 article is important as it rebuts the notion of a simple knowledge production within a single consultant team. Instead, they offer a varied notion of knowledge being produced by the relationship between consultants and clients, as well as in the wider community of practice of the consultants' concerned sector. While their focus is on management consultants, the identified aspects of how knowledge gets co-produced, legitimized, and codified/standardized does also apply to the international development sector, although it may be less evolved with regard to stringent communities of practices, which does – however – not minimize the crucial influence of certain knowledge that is considered and regulated as standard and good practice to be applied in most project cases.

Stone, Diane. 2004. Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the 'Transnationalization' of Policy.

Stone's 2004 paper on the transnationalization of policy is rather broad on the actual identification of transfer agents, listing basically every type of organization from think tanks and research institutes to consultancies and foundations. Also, the consulting industry has experienced significant evolution after 2004, which are therefore not yet reflected in Stone's paper. She does, however, provide a valuable critique of international (foreign) consultants and their knowledge about local specificities and practice of 'one-size-fits-all' solutions. She also analyzes the different hard (e.g. legislation and regulation) and soft forms (workshops, communities of practice, awareness campaigns) of how policy knowledge is transferred.

Temenos, Cristina, and Eugene McCann. 2013. Geographies of Policy Mobilities. Geography Compass: 7-5. P. 344-357.

Temenos and McCann in their 2013 article build up on McCann's policy mobilities and underscore the importance of focusing on actors, motivation, and changes in moving policies across places:
"Certain governance strategies or policies, 'best practices', and 'received wisdoms' seem to be everywhere, and they resonate with us in their familiarity, even if we have not consciously studied them. They have 'gone viral'. They move around from place to place, and they hang in the air during discussions about how to govern places. (…) we should not assume that the policies themselves, or their proliferation, are somehow 'natural' or teleological. They are not naturally or unproblematically good or 'best', and what is important about them is not so much that they move around in some abstract sense but that people move them around for particular purposes." (344)

They juxtapose the policy transfer and the policy mobility literature by sensitizing to take a more nuanced perspective on the changes that happen to policies while they are mobile, as multiple processes influence these changes and the "sites of encounter, persuasion, and motivation" (346) are less straight-forward than previous research claimed. Their study is useful in that it sheds light on a broader array of actors in policy mobilities beyond the obvious decision-makers. Furthermore, they illustrate how the idea of best practice policies has been increasingly linked to the idea of model city that have seemingly excelled in implementing such policy (350).

Van Ewijk, Edith, Isa Baud, Marike Bontenbal, Michaela Hordijk, Paul van Lindert, Gerry Nijenhuis, Guus van Westen. 2014. Capacity Development or New Learning Spaces through Municipal International Cooperation: Policy Mobility at Work?. Urban Studies. P. 1-19.

Going beyond this report, Van Ewijk et al. in their 2014 article point towards an emerging element in urban development advisory – that of municipalities dispatching their own staff to partner municipalities. The authors are clear to draw the picture of a two-way exchange of knowledge and policies, as staff from Dutch cities participating in peer-to-peer learning in the Global South brought back experiences that fed into their very own systems. On the capacity development side, the article highlights "multiplier effects" (16) that refer to knowledge transfer and increased capacity not only of those people and units that directly participate in the learning programs but also across governmental levels.

Vogelpohl, Anne. 2016 (Manuscript). Consultants' View on Cities and the Critical Role of Local Administration in Urban Politics. Manuscript for: Theresa Enright and Ugo Rossi. Forthcoming. The Urban Political: Ambivalent Spaces of Late Neoliberalism.

Vogelpohl's research provides the closest link to this report. She has studied how globally operating experts and neoliberal policies relate to each other in a setting of management consultants advising urban decision-makers and city managers on development visions and strategies. A critical perspective is offered of consultants heavily influencing already the identification and framing of urban development issues, by which they direct where the ensuing agenda setting and formulation of corresponding policies go. Consultants are doing this by referring to international comparisons, applying 'facts and figures' calculation to support their argument for a bright urban future, providing simplified visions that are easy to jump on, and highlighting the responsibility and determination that is required from local decision-makers.

Vogelpohl illustrates how consultants benefit from being perceived as pragmatic and neutral brokers that can lay out the facts and make rational conclusions from these that are very much prescriptive in painting situations where cities can seemingly only go in two opposing directions – one "right", one "wrong". However, the role of the local administration is underscored as municipal (technical) staff are a key additional player when it comes to actual decisions and implementation of consultants' plans and recommended actions – a process that is more complex, time-consuming, and much less linear than previous studies have argued when following best practice from its planning to its implementation.

Zetter, Roger, and Mohamed E. Hamza. 1997. The Impact of Foreign Technical Assistance on Urban Development Projects in Egypt. Habitat International: 21-2. P. 153-166.

In their 1997 article, Zetter and Hamza offer an examination of foreign technical assistance projects in the urban sector in Egypt. While their findings have to be seen in the development work setting of more than a decade ago, they point towards a variety of challenges that come with consulting work that is not sufficiently adapted/adaptive to local contexts. In addition, they discuss the critical role of foreign governments, the Egyptian state apparatus, and even the implementers on the micro level with their own interests in development projects:

"The motives behind American and other Western aid to Egypt were political in the first place, economic in the second, and 'developmental' third. (…) Development assistance is not politically neutral. (…) Nor is aid neutral in a technical sense. Aid agencies are staffed by technocrats and administrators who have their own professional ideologies and their own personal ambitions (…). Short-term perspectives, logistical constraints, relative ignorance of local capacities and cultures, poor communication, and an implicit control model are parts of this problem." (155)

Project locations are selected based on political considerations and project designs are influenced by management aspects of ensured disbursement, achieved deliverables, minimal costs, and (perceived) impacts. Zetter and Hamza criticize how the multitude of project-based

interventions could not achieve similar results as process-based and more programmatic interventions:

"Donor agencies continually experiment with new or refined principles and procedures, frequently the outcomes of new professional trends and political fashions. (…) In Egypt as elsewhere, these principles were implemented in an unsystematic way, were often conflicting with each other and with local practicalities, and thus resistance of one form or another tended to arise." (158)

Very much informing other research and practice on participatory processes, the authors discuss how existing power relations in combination with local people's different skills and experience heavily impact on who can actually participate how in community-based activities – despite all the best intentions a project concept may have (160-163).

A couple of other research contributions could be mentioned here as well, such as Jennifer Robinsons "Ordinary Cities" from 2006, Andrew Harris and Susan Moore's 2013 article on "Planning Histories and Practices of Circulating Urban Knowledge", or the very recent 2016 work by Ruth Craggs and Hannah Neate on "Post-Colonial Careering and Urban Policy Mobility: Between Britain and Nigeria, 1945-1990".

Literature that can inform the research on urban development consultants in international development projects is still scarce, but there are signs that interlinking research articles are increasingly emerging.

Chapter 3.   Research Approach

One weakness in the existing discussion about both management and international development consultants is the use or reference to 'the consultant', as if consultants in their corresponding field of practice form a rather uniform type of service provider. While it is worth to study more closely different types of management consultants, it is equally useful to differentiate international development consultants.

One obvious aspect concerns their status as international or national (local) consultants. Aspects of age, work experience, and seniority can be differentiated. There are different sub-specializations of consultants focusing on environmental sub-sectors and themes, economics, social development, good governance, spatial planning, etc. Consultants usually develop expertise in locational/geographical terms (regions, countries, and their political, economic, social, and environmental systems). And their mode of employment varies from consulting company employee, manager, or owner to sub-contracted or individually employed freelancing consultants. Some dedicate full-time to international development consulting assignments, others work mainly for the government, the commercial private sector, or research institutes. Other differentiations can be thought of, but the principle becomes clear that there is no 'the consultant' and their different backgrounds, skill sets, and experiences will characterize their work approach, motivation, perception, and performance.

One important differentiation that has to be made concerns the particular (or maybe even peculiar) relationship setting of consultants in international development projects versus more standard project settings where consultancies provide their services directly to a public agency (either for a service contract, unsolicited, or pro bono). In international development projects, consultancies have two different focal points (see Figure 3.1). On the one hand, the consultancies usually get contracted and/or are responsible for delivering upon the project outputs to a project client, which tends to be an international organization (a multilateral development bank, a bilateral development organization, a foundation, an NGO etc.). On the other hand, the consultancies are required to provide their services to a project owner, which usually is a national ministry, a provincial government, or a municipality. Thus, consultancies have two direct (and maybe even conflicting) lines of responsibility and focus.

Figure 3.1: Urban Development Projects in International Development
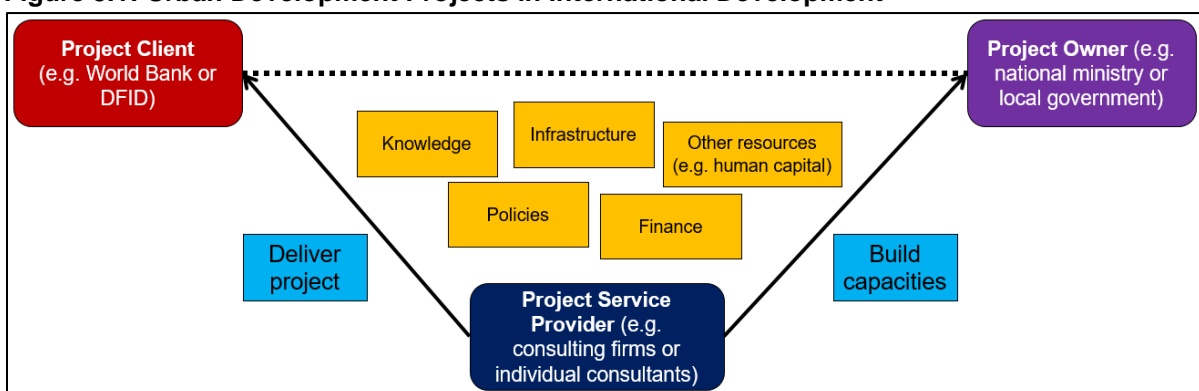
Source: Author.

Furthermore, there is more than just *advisory* services that are provided in international development projects. In urban sector projects, for instance, there are numerous elements (outputs, services, support or different) that can be roughly clustered along: i) knowledge (know-how and good practices); ii) policies (advisory and reform); iii) infrastructure (physical elements); iv) finance (application, access, and facilitation for funds); v) and other resources (human capital, implementation support, equipment). So while broadly defined a consultancy delivers a project to

the project client and build capacities of a project owner, there are more aspects to be considered when analyzing their work. Most crucially the two-pronged responsibility has to be recognized.

In line with this argument, the research started off from the idea to scope and identify different types of urban development consultants in international development projects. Gow in the above referenced article concluded:

> *"What sort of people would work under such conditions: missionaries, mercenaries, misfits, misanthropes, madmen? (…) usually strong-willed, independent-minded, somewhat anarchistic men and women." (1991: 7)*

While his analysis may be based on a different period of consulting work, Gow's attempt at defining consultant types still triggers the imagination of those familiar with the work field. Based on Honadle et al. (1983), Gow identifies performers, substitutes, teachers, mobilizers, and scapegoating gadflies (1991: 9-10). Jumping forward a quarter century, this research initially identified the following consulting types: tech nerds, professors, rangers, dinosaurs, future international organization staff, former international organization staff, jetsetters, and conformists. These types are further illustrated in the

Appendix: Types of International Development Consultants. But it has to be underscored that this typology is based on the author's professional work experience and not further verified through empirical research, as the approach of starting with a pre-defined typology was not considered the most fruitful for the analysis.

Taking into account what McCann wrote in his defining paper on urban policy mobilities with respect to typologies of the broader set of policy transfer agents:

> *"I have suggested that care needs to be taken when identifying important policy transfer agents because there is a danger of calcifying discussion into typologies that hinder rather than facilitate analysis of social processes. Yet, the need to understand and identify who mobilizes policy is crucial precisely because mobilities are social processes." (2010: 113)*

It is this need for better understanding that informed the further design of this research. Instead of working with typologies, one step back was taken to get an original perspective onto the actors in focus: urban development consultants in international development projects. Although this approach would fall short of providing a deep analytical elaboration of how urban development consultants in international development projects impact upon urban development, it would provide a foundation onto which further research can build. In conclusion, this meant to research the topic along the guiding questions of who, what, why, how, where, and when – with how and why potentially providing the deepest insights into the most critical questions (Figure 2.1).

Chapter 4.   Research Methodology

An online questionnaire (through Google Forms) was designed to obtain information from a wide field of different, geographically dispersed respondents in a limited amount of time.

The questionnaire had 32 questions, organized in five sections covering broadly: i) background; ii) general work characteristics; iii) work style/approach/implementation; iv) work motivation; and v) work perception. The format of questions included: i) multiple choice for time, spatial, and status-related questions; ii) rating scales for time and agreement-related questions; iii) open questions. Open questions were specifically used for topics where the pre-definition of replies would have potentially led respondents in a certain direction.

The 32 questions emerged from the following overarching aspects:

- **Who** are 'the' consultants in urban development projects in international development?
- **How** do urban development consultants approach and execute their work?
- What role do other **stakeholders** play in their work? How do urban development consultants perceive these stakeholders?
- What role does **knowledge** play in their work? Where do urban development consultants get it from? How do they share it?
- **Why** do urban development consultants work in international development?
- How do urban development consultants perceive their **work/work context**? How do they relate to these?

The questionnaire required approximately half an hour to fill out (with all questions requiring an answer). Results were later quantitatively analyzed and – where useful – clustered; also for open questions, for which answers were tagged and then quantitatively analyzed. For illustration, exemplary open answers will be provided in the findings sections of this report. However, these should be treated with caution, as the analysis did not provide for an elaborated qualitative study of each individual respondent.

The questionnaire was discussed and revised upon feedback from both researchers and practitioners. Additional informal conversations prior and during the research informed the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire findings. Due to time and resource constraints, no further formal interviews were conducted. It is recognized that a larger research project could continue at this point.

The questionnaire web-link with information on the research project was shared via email, including one reminder email, throughout May 2016. Based on the author's work contacts, the questionnaire email was sent to about 300 direct recipients, with additional 'second-order' recipients who got the email forwarded by colleagues. Part of this emailing was the sending of the questionnaire via LinkedIn, through which the author tried to contact other consultants and consulting companies with whom he had not worked or interacted before.

Overall, 67 respondents filled out the questionnaire. This corresponds with a response rate of about 20-25%. On the one hand, the response rate is very positive in light of the length of the questionnaire and the often difficult contacting of consultants.[1] On the other hand, it is clear that 67 respondents distributed all over the world and from different work contexts and backgrounds are not sufficient to form a representative data set. However, it was not the aim of the research to

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[1] Consultants in international development projects tend to be very much occupied with numerous simultaneous assignments and their appetite for non-project work, particularly research, is perceived as very low.
Regarding the number of respondents: In comparison, Diallo and Thuillier in their 2004 study with project coordinators used a paper-based questionnaire that was sent via mail to 600 recipients with 93 responses, which translates to a response rate of about 15%.

provide a significant large sample size, but to obtain any information at all in a research area where broader – even though not representative – findings are rather absent.

While a variety of different correlations can be tested between the different answers in the questionnaire, the findings in this report have been presented through the perspective of respondents' years of work experience where relevant differences could be found (otherwise summary results are presented). The years of work experience – which in most cases would also closely correspond with respondents' age – has been divided into: i) junior – less than 10 years of work experience; ii) mid-career – between 10 and 25 years of work experience; and iii) senior – more than 25 years of work experience.

Keeping in mind the limited number of questionnaire respondents, the findings presented and discussed in this report shall rather inform the understanding and debate of urban development consultants and their work in international development projects, instead of providing a quantitatively rich analysis.

Chapter 5. Who Are 'the' Consultants?

Starting with a differentiation into the position the respondents are working in, an expected pattern emerges (Figure 5.1). Respondents with less than 10 years of work experience tend to be in employee positions in consulting companies, international organizations, or research institutes and similar. In contrast, research-affiliated positions are not common for more experienced respondents in the survey, who also predominantly do not work as employees for consulting companies. Among those with less than 25 years of work experience, about one fifth are working in international organizations. Around half of the respondents with more than 10 years of work experience are in the position of a freelancing consultant, while respondents with more than 25 years of work experience are the only group where about a quarter of all respondents indicate that they hold a managing position in a consulting company.

**Figure 5.1: Job Status Differences of Respondents by Years of Work Experience**
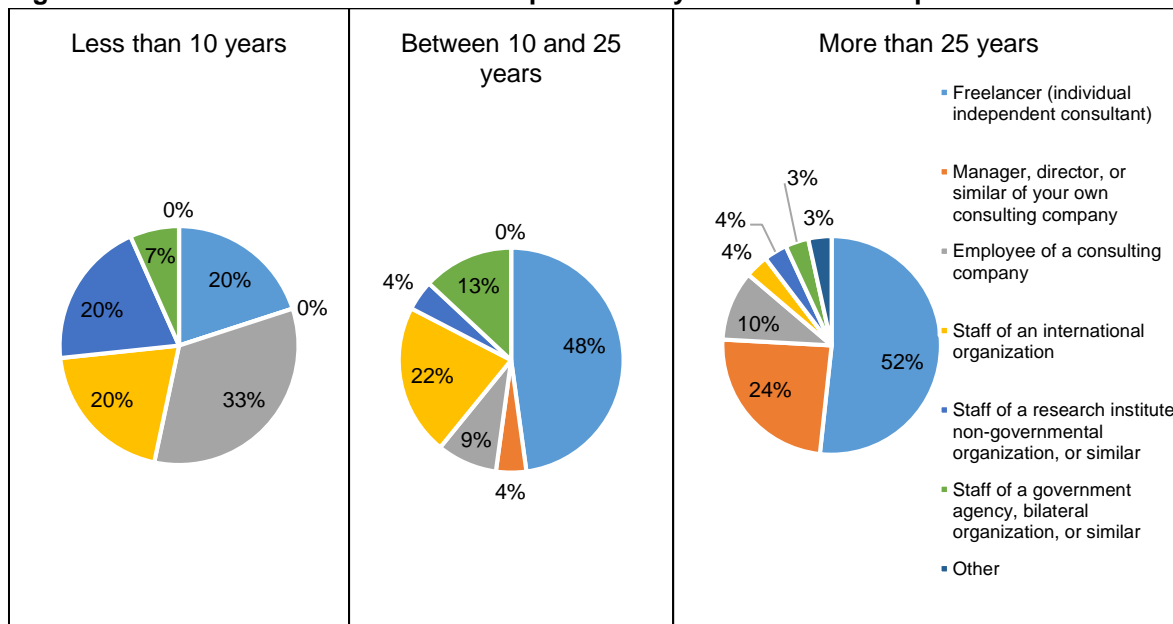
Source: Author.

In order to know more about the geographical work focus of the respondents, questions were asked regarding regions and the top three countries they have worked in urban development projects (Figure 5.2). The survey sample shows a certain tendency toward Asia and the Pacific, with more than one third of all respondents having worked there. The region of Africa and the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) follows with about one quarter, and thus, slightly more than Europe. The Americas ranges fourth with only 15%. This can be related to the author's exposure to different regions and corresponding linkages to other colleagues in these regions, thus limiting the geographical reach of the questionnaire emails that were sent out during the research.

Looking at the top three countries, a similar finding appears (Figure 5.3). Viet Nam, the Philippines, India, Cambodia, China, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand, and Bangladesh are among the twelve most named countries by respondents. Only Kenya on position 7 and Germany and Tanzania on position 11 and 12, respectively, are from outside Asia and the Pacific. On the other hand, 64 countries from all regions were mentioned by the respondents, underscoring the wide geographical diversity of consultants' work assignments. On the other hand, the certain bias of survey respondents toward Asia and the Pacific allows for a more in-depth analysis of the results with regard to region-specific findings, as the author did in his presentation at the ADB Urban Sector Group workshop in August 2016.

Figure 5.2: Work Regions of Respondents
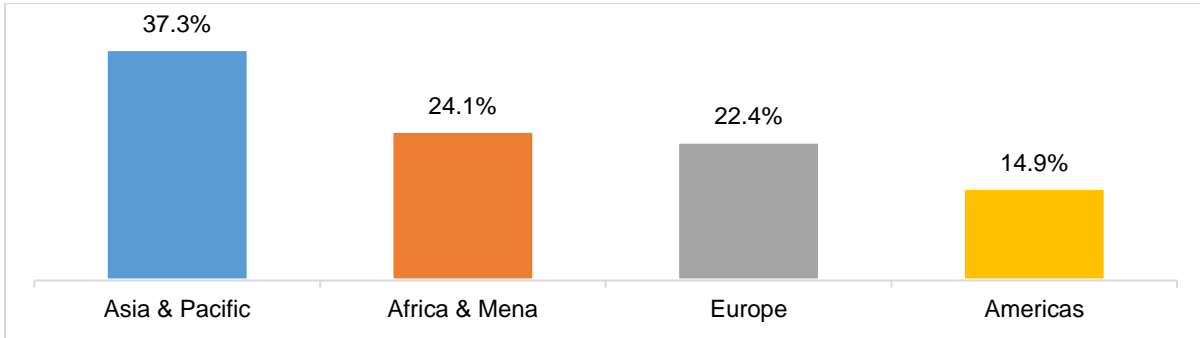
Note: Mena – Middle East/North Africa.
Source: Author.

Figure 5.3: Top Three Work Countries of Respondents
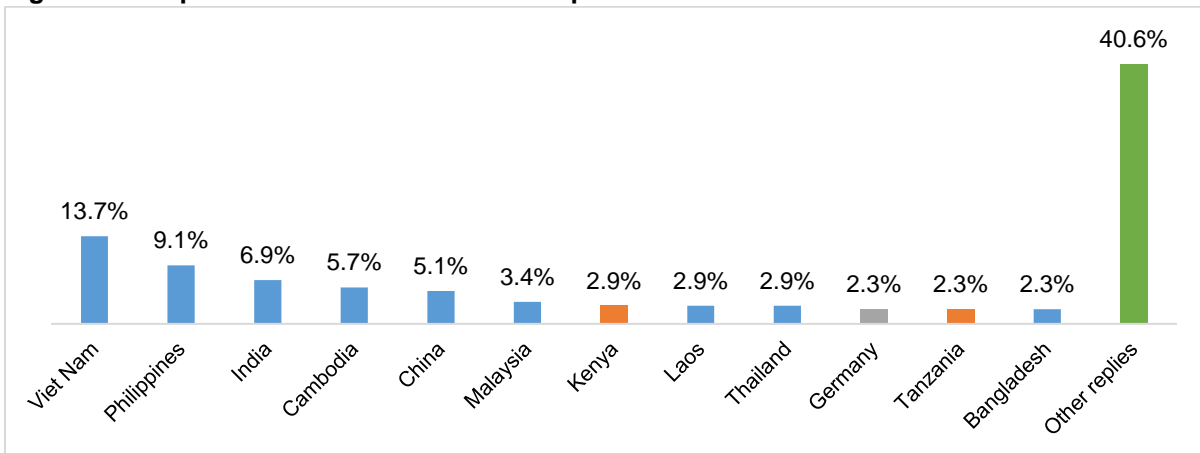
Note: Countries in Asia and the Pacific are marked blue. African countries are marked orange. European countries are marked grey. And other replies (representing 52 countries from all regions) are marked green.
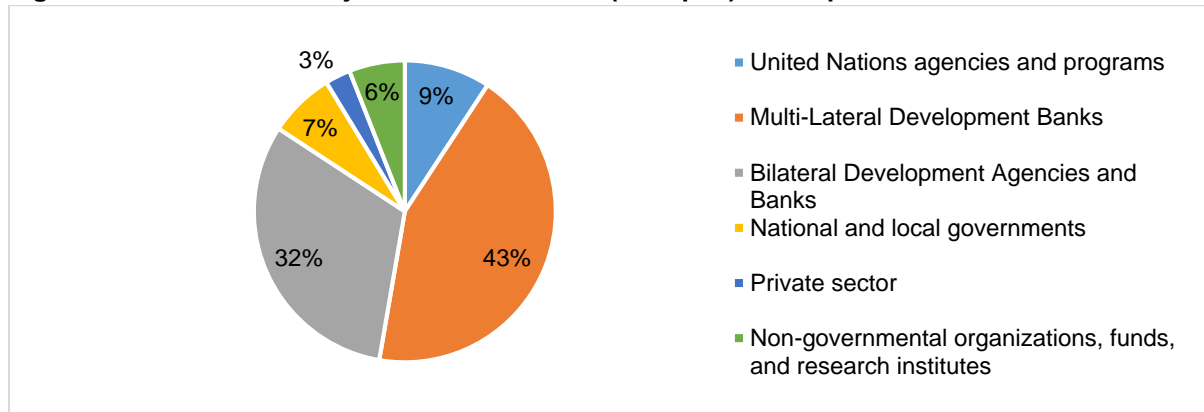Source: Author.

The questionnaire also included an open question about the respondents' three key areas of expertise. The variety of responses clearly underscores the diversity in consultant profiles and specialties that characterizes the sector. Clustering the open responses into categories, one can identify spatial planning skills to be mentioned by nearly half of the respondents (48%). Another often stated area of expertise refers to public policy (40%), including good governance, institutional development, and public management, amongst others. Thereafter, response shares range between 10-20% for far-spread expertise areas covering the environment, economics, and social sectors, and partly also more thematic areas such as project management, climate change, infrastructure financing, or gender.

The survey participants were asked about their three main project clients/partners (Figure 5.4). Organization types of main project clients/partners were divided into: i) United Nations agencies and programs; ii) multi-lateral development banks; iii) bilateral development agencies and banks; iv) national and local governments; v) private sector; and iv) non-governmental organizations, funds, and research institutes.[2]

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[2] Individually named project clients have been sorted as follows: **i) United Nations agencies and programs**: UN-Habitat; United Nations; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; United Nations Children's Emergency Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations World Tourism Organization; **ii) multi-lateral development banks**: African Development Bank; Asian Development Bank; Development Bank of Latin America; European Investment Bank; Inter-American Development Bank; World Bank; **iii) bilateral development agencies and banks**: African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States; Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Danish International Development Agency; European Union and Commission; French Development Agency;

Multi-lateral development banks are among the majority of responses (43%), with bilateral development agencies and banks following on second place (32%). United Nations agencies and programs (9%), national and local governments (7%), non-governmental organizations, funds, and research institutes (6%), and private sector (3%) follow thereafter.

Figure 5.4: Three Main Project Clients/Partners (Grouped) of Respondents

Source: Author.

Correlating these results with years of work experience provides an interesting finding (Figure 5.5): United Nations agencies and programs, national and local governments, as well as private sector, and even more so multi-lateral development banks are more likely stated by respondents with longer work experience. On the other hand, bilaterals and non-governmental organizations, funds, and research institutes are the more likely project client/partner of less experienced respondents.

Figure 5.5: Three Main Project Clients/Partners (Grouped) of Respondents by Years of Work Experience
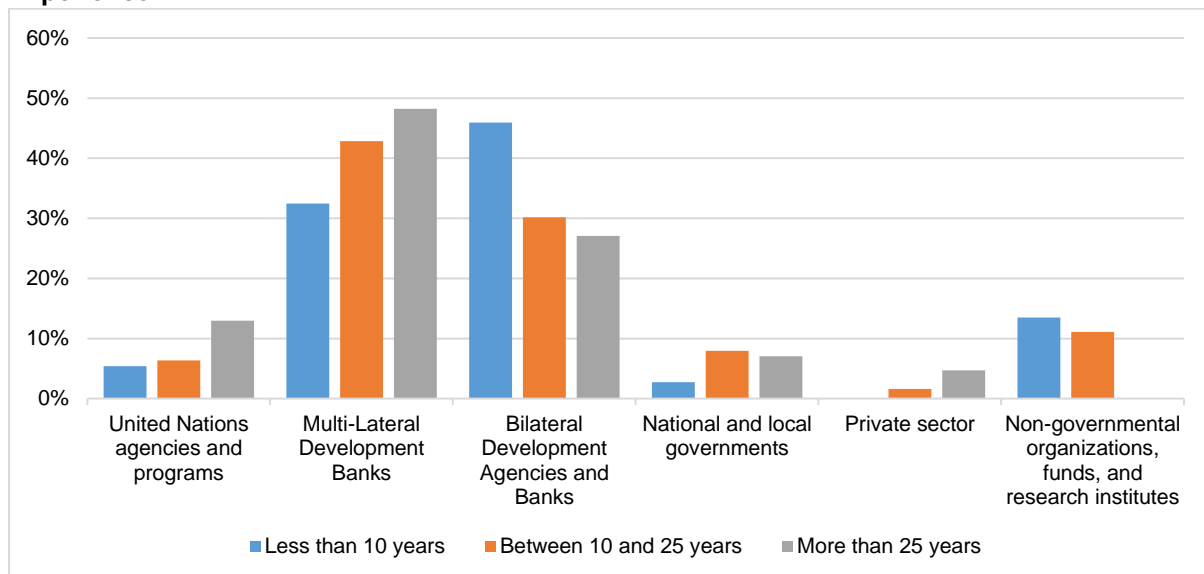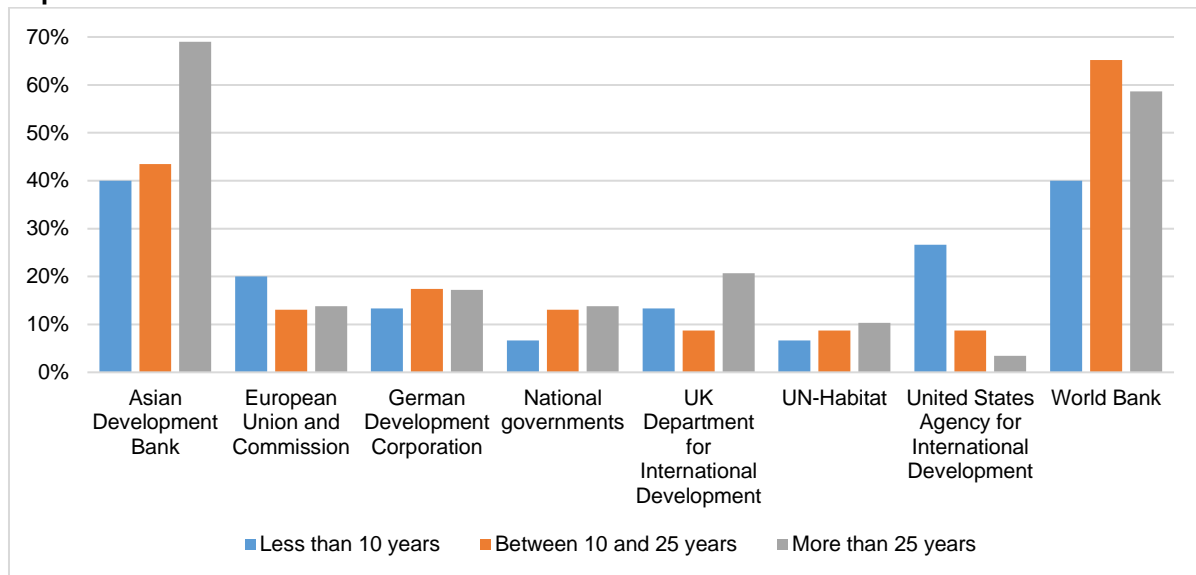

Source: Author.

German Development Bank; German Development Corporation; German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; Italian Government; Japan International Cooperation Agency; Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs; UK Department for International Development; United States Agency for International Development; **iv) national and local governments**: local governments (not specified); national governments (not specified); **v) private sector**: private sector (not specified); and **iv) non-governmental organizations, funds, and research institutes**: C40; Ford Foundation; Global Environment Facility; non-governmental organizations (not specified); Rockefeller Foundation; Tata Trust; The Development House; universities and research institutes (not specified).

It makes sense to study these results in even further detail, looking at the specific organizations named most often, and then comparing for differences in the years of work experience (Figure 5.6). In this case, the findings appear striking for USAID, as well as for World Bank and ADB. USAID shows a strong tendency toward less experienced respondents in this survey, which can be related to their project feature of teaming up senior consultants with sector-equivalent junior consultants. On the exact opposite side, multi-lateral development banks have a reputation – possibly more traditionally than in the future – for preferring highly experienced consultants. And the survey results show this in the stark difference for consultants with more than 10 years of work experience in the case of World Bank, and consultants with more than 25 years of work experience in the case of ADB.

Figure 5.6: Three Main Project Clients/Partners (Individual) of Respondents by Years of Work Experience

Source: Author.

Respondents were also asked about the usual ratio between international and national (local) consultants in their projects (Figure 5.7). Possibly pointing toward a trend of increased national capacities, the majority of respondents (60%) see the ratio beyond 50:50, and only one sixth of the respondents indicate a ratio leaning toward international team members above 50%.

Figure 5.7: Ratio between International and National (Local) Consultants in Respondents' Projects
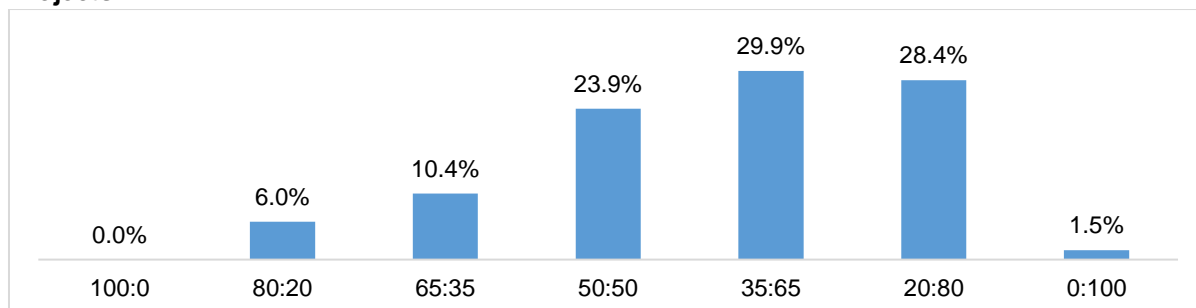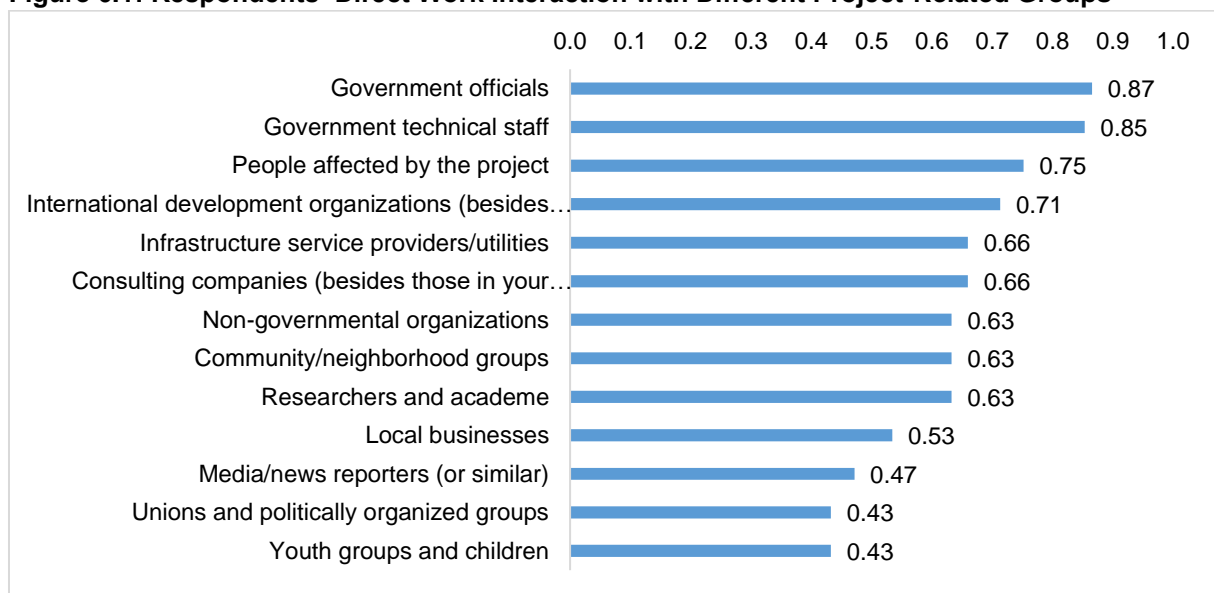

Source: Author.

Concluding from these initial results, it comes as no surprise that there is not 'the' consultant – neither in urban projects in international development work, nor (probably) in international development work in general. Differentiating respondents and their responses by years of work experience reveals relevant aspects regarding their job status, and their main project clients/partners, where more senior consultants are in more independent and/or responsible positions working more likely for multi-lateral development banks. Findings on the expertise and geographical distribution of respondents' underscores that there is a seemingly endless diversity in the sector. The survey shows a concentration of respondents with regard to Asia and the Pacific – an aspect that could be addressed and controlled for in future studies – but still bears more broadly applicable results, as even consultants focusing on Asia and the Pacific indicate work assignments and experience beyond this region.

Chapter 6.   Consultants' Work Approaches

Getting to know more about how consultants approach their work, two perspectives are most crucial: how and with whom. The ladder refers to the actors and institutions that consultants work with in their assignments. Not surprisingly, respondents in the survey named government officials and technical staff as those most often interacted with in their projects (Figure 6.1). Thereafter, people affected by the project and international development organizations besides those in the concerned project/assignment are named. Ranging between sometimes and often with regard to respondents' direct work interaction are infrastructure service providers/utilities, consulting companies besides those in the concerned project/assignment, non-governmental organizations, community/neighborhood groups, researchers and academe, as well as local businesses (although the ladder at the bottom of this group). Less than "sometimes" do respondents directly interact with media/news reporters, unions and politically organized groups, as well as youth groups and children.

These results are very important in an ongoing debate on how aware of and open to consultants (and indirectly their project clients, project owners, and thus project designs) are to 'non-traditional' project-related groups, in particular the local private sector, the political sphere, and younger citizens. Even though it is nowadays demanded by most project guidelines, seeing people affected by the project ranking on position three with 0.75 sheds a positive light on consultants' work approaches.

Figure 6.1: Respondents' Direct Work Interaction with Different Project-Related Groups

Note: Scale from 0 to 1 represents the range between the response options: never (0), rarely (0.25), sometimes (0.5), often (0.75), always (1).
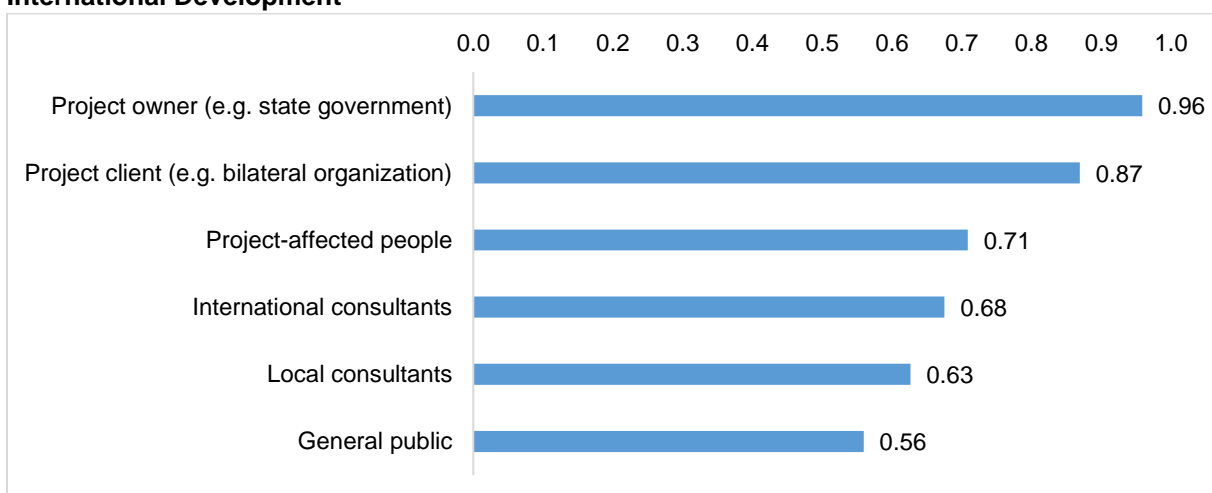Source: Author.

Survey respondents were asked a follow-up question about which groups they think are currently now yet sufficiently engaged in their projects. Here, respondents show a clear awareness of above-mentioned debate, as they indicated youth groups and children, people affected by the project, local businesses, non-governmental organizations, community/neighborhood groups, unions and politically organized groups, and media/news reporters among the top 7 responses (totaling at about 72% of all responses). Only 12% of the responses indicated that no single group is insufficiently engaged in their projects.

This first follow-up question also inquired about possible reasons respondents think that the identified groups were not yet sufficiently engaged in their projects. Although an open question with many different answers, they can be clustered in three areas:

1) **Political System**: Some respondents describe the political system to be defined in a way that is not conducive to broad stakeholder engagement, for instance due to a lack of human rights principles and/or insecure power relations and conflicts between office holders and an opposition. Some respondents also describe how they themselves or their project counterparts prefer to work only with those stakeholders that have decision-making power.

2) **Perception:** Respondents mention the challenge of representation when engaging stakeholders in their projects, as an identified stakeholder group does not yet tell whom of such group should actually participate in a project. Also stakeholder groups can be very diverse and/or large in size – prompting the ironical question about: 'Who is civil society?' Also, respondents note insufficient preparation (people affected by the project), lack of capacities (youth and children), limited credibility (media/news reporters), and little project contribution/relevance (local businesses) preventing the participation of certain stakeholder groups.

3) **Project design, methods, and skills**: Respondents describe constraints with respect to time and the project terms of reference (TOR), their own lack of knowledge about local specificities, as well as methods in their particular sub-sector that do not yet account for more qualitative ways of engaging stakeholders and which, instead, rely on expert-driven quantitative methodologies (as mentioned for instance by one respondent with regard to urban transport modelling).

In relation to this set of questions, the aspect of power has to be included in the picture. Respondents rated six broad project stakeholder groups in a typical urban development project in international development (Figure 6.2). Again not surprisingly, project owner (e.g. state government) and project client (e.g. bilateral organization) rank at the top. Then there is a gap, with project-affected people following on a distant third place. International consultants – so most of the respondents themselves – ended up on fourth place, before national (local) consultants and the general public.

Figure 6.2: Perceived Power of Stakeholder Groups in Typical Urban Development Projects in International Development

Note: Scale from 0 to 1 represents the range between the response options: not powerful at all (0), less powerful (0.34), somewhat powerful (0.66), very powerful (1).
Source: Author.

Juxtaposing these two sets of results, it becomes clear that respondents – even though they are aware of not yet sufficiently engaged stakeholder groups – may see themselves not in the most powerful position to actually influence the factors that cause this lack of engagement. From the three areas mentioned above, the political system is beyond the direct impact of consultants. The second aspect of perception goes in both directions and can be influenced somewhat by consultants. The third aspect of project design, methodologies, and skills is, however, clearly dependent on project clients and their implementing consultants.

Moving from the 'with whom' to the 'how' question, respondents rated in the questionnaire how much time they usually spend on generic project tasks (Figure 6.3). Although the results are relatively close to each other, some conclusions can be drawn.

Respondents seem to spend most time on interacting with project owners and preparing reports. Thereafter, desk studies, interaction with government technical staff, as well as project clients, and project management and administration tasks follow. Comparatively less time is spent on the actual technical work, the interaction with local project stakeholders, and the inspection of project sites.

These results are interesting, but have to be treated with caution. One aspect for different amount of time spent on these tasks can be related to general difficulty or lengthiness. For instance, much time may be spent on interacting with project owners, as consultants' projects do not only require much coordination, but because developing the 'ownership' by project owners can be difficult where opinions and perspectives differ. On the other hand, standardized technical tasks such as an economic analysis are be less bound to social relation aspects or challenges of interaction, and can thus be completed in less time.

On the other hand, one can read these results with more concern, arguing that project reporting on second place and project management and administration on sixth place rank fairly high in comparison to essential tasks for sound and inclusive projects, such as in-depth technical analyses, stakeholder consultations, and on-site visits.

**Figure 6.3: Consultants' Time Usually Spent on Generic Project Tasks**
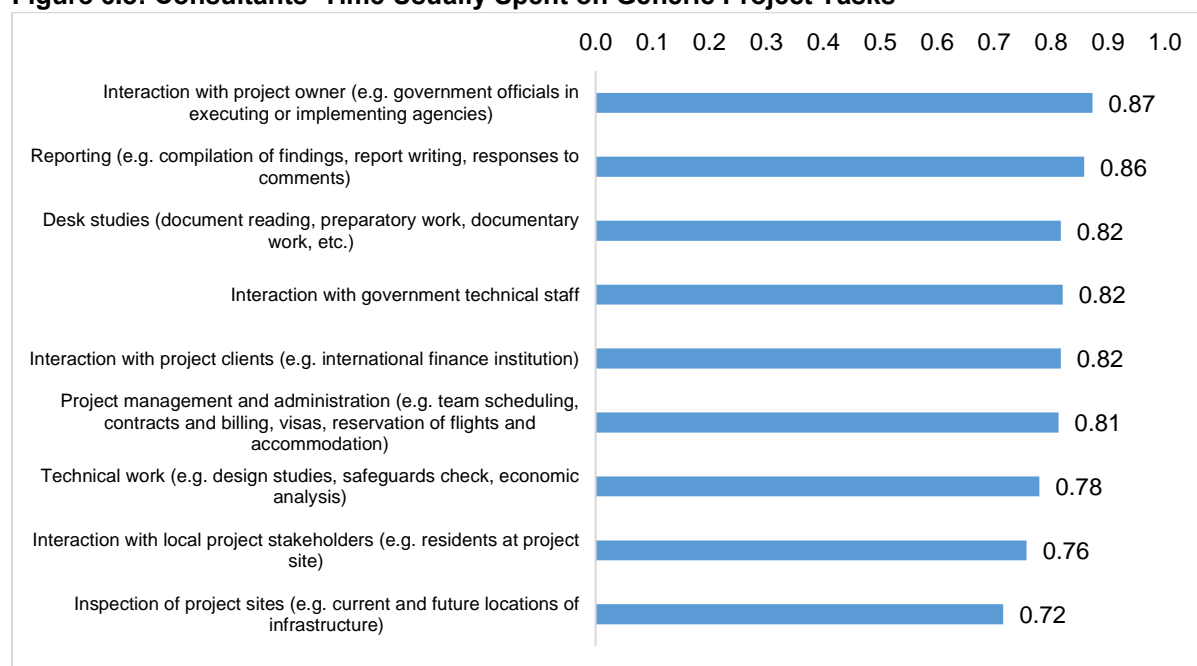
Note: Scale from 0 to 1 represents the range between the response options: no time at all (0), little time (0.34), some time (0.66), a lot of time (1).
Source: Author.

One open question inquired about the sources of respondents' technical knowledge (Figure 6.4). The various answers were categories into three groups: i) desk work-related sources (or tasks), which have the largest share of about two fifths; ii) practical work-related sources (or tasks), which have a third of the share; and iii) knowledge sharing-related sources (or tasks), which have a share of about one quarter.

Figure 6.4: Sources of Respondents' Technical Knowledge (Grouped)
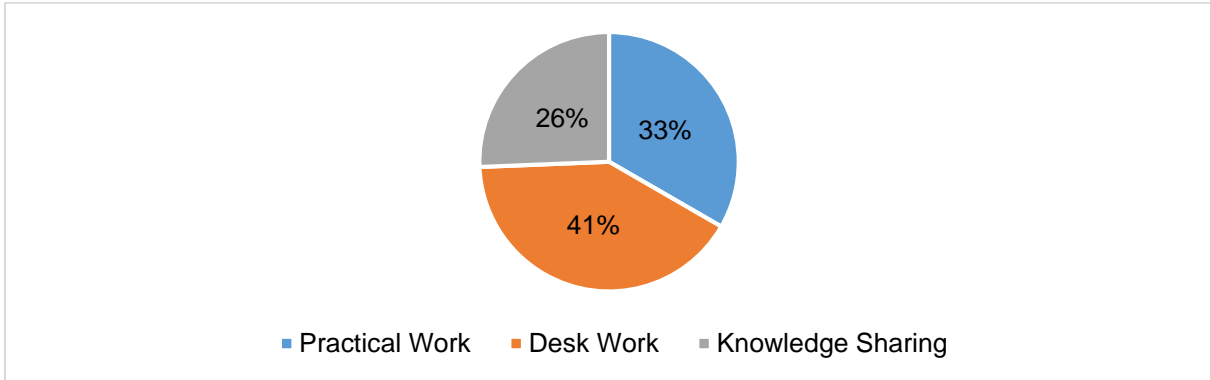
Source: Author.

Differentiating these results by years of work experience hints toward a more important role of practical work as a technical knowledge source for more senior consultants, while knowledge sharing plays a significantly larger role for junior consultants (Figure 6.5). Mid-career consultants between 10 and 25 years of work experience, however, ascribe desk work-related sources and tasks an important role for their technical knowledge. These differences are further discussed in Chapter 7.

Figure 6.5: Sources of Respondents' Technical Knowledge (Grouped) by Years of Work Experience
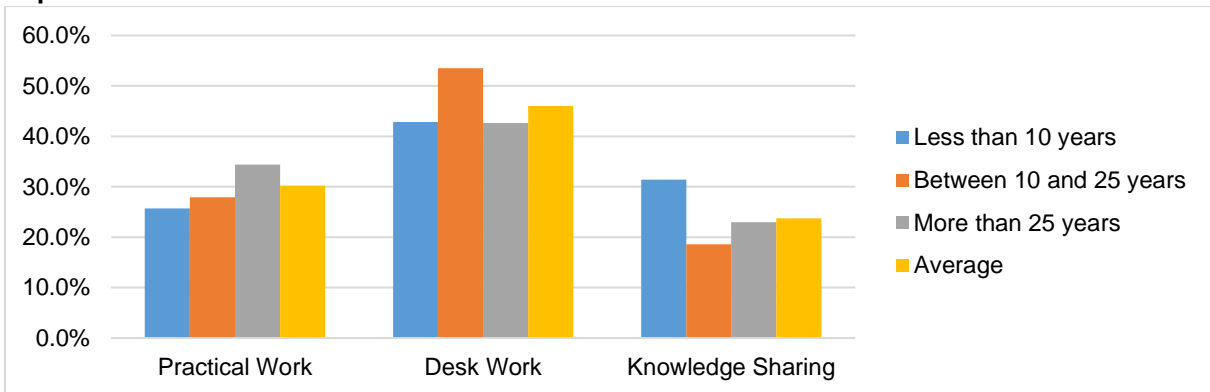
Source: Author.

As an additional step of analysis, Table 6.1 shows the differences for respondents by years of work experiences for a more fine-grained categorization. While for instance the academic education plays an equally important role for respondents across the whole range of work experience, colleagues/peers and professional network are of particular relevance to more junior respondents – even forming the second top knowledge source for them. In line with the broader category of 'desk work', respondents between 10 and 25 years of work experience value technical guidelines and reports from expert organizations, as well as online sources and reading as important sources. The more senior respondents exemplify, however, the stereotype of the hands-on consultant, with work experience and learning-by-doing being by far the dominant source of their technical knowledge.

Table 6.1: Sources of Respondents' Technical Knowledge (Sub-Categories) by Years of Work Experience

Years of Work Experience	Less than 10 years	Between 10 and 25 years	More than 25 years	Average
Work experience and learning-by-doing	**60.0%**	**47.8%**	**69.0%**	**59.7%**
Academic education	**46.7%**	**47.8%**	**48.3%**	**47.8%**
Colleagues/peers and professional network	**53.3%**	13.0%	27.6%	28.4%
Online sources and reading	40.0%	**26.1%**	**34.5%**	**32.8%**
Training and self-study	6.7%	17.4%	17.2%	14.9%
Technical guidelines and reports from expert organizations	13.3%	**26.1%**	6.9%	14.9%
Workshops and conferences	13.3%	4.3%	3.4%	6.0%
Local experts and knowledge	0.0%	4.3%	3.4%	3.0%

Note: Top three responses for each group highlighted in bold.
Source: Author.

Respondents were also asked about their ability to converse in the local languages of their project locations. Slightly more than one third of respondents indicate that they can speak all or most of the local languages of the places they work in, while nearly half of them are limited in their conversational skills, and about one fifth cannot converse in any of the local languages. While the results implicate a diversity among respondents, it underscores once again the importance of national (local) consultants, interpreters, or English- (French-/Japanese-/…) speaking project counterparts as intermediaries in international development projects.

The final open question in the questionnaire was originally thought of only as an additional 'scoping' question; however, the results make an interesting discussion. Respondents were asked if they have ever brought back solutions or lessons learned from their project cities and applied these in their home towns/countries. Percentage-wise, there was a nearly even share of those replying yes and those replying no. But among both replies, different groups of respondents can be differentiated.

For those replying yes, one group could name directly a solution, practice, system, or similar that they could transfer and apply in their home context – either in practical or academic terms, as illustrated by the following two quotes:

Have you ever brought back solutions or lessons learned from a project city and applied it in your home town/country? Please specify.

Yes. In transportation and energy system analysis.

Yes – the Danish urban flood management practice is built on that.

I have always drawn lessons from all my projects. One of my main responsibilities is teaching and I always integrated my field experience in my teaching.

Another yes-group indicated that they could not directly transfer a practice, but they learned or acquired skills in their projects that were of use in their home contexts, as shown in the following two examples:

Not directly in this sense. I am rarely involved in urban planning in my home town, but often at home I can contribute by intercultural communication aspects to mediate misunderstandings or conflicts.

> *Not really applied, but I often tell colleagues and friends in my home country about how/what we do in our projects in developing countries and often there is also much to learn for my home country in terms of stakeholder participation, strategic planning, climate-resilient infrastructure, etc.*

Among the no-respondents, two differing groups can be identified. One group saw itself opposed or not attracted by their (former) home context, as the following quote illustrates:

> *I live in the Developing World (…) so my home is there. I am Dutch, but live (…) in Egypt. I could never ever live again in my own country. I find it too 'absurd' to notice people complaining about nothing, in Europe, or elsewhere in 'the West'. To work in these projects it is hugely important to remain in touch with reality, and be close to actual daily realities of what is going on, in the world's less organized (sometimes mega) cities.*

The second no-group's reason for not having brought back solutions or lessons learned to their home towns/countries is rather bound to the inability or lack of opportunity to do so, as the following three examples show:

> *No, have not worked in my own country for more than 30 years.*

> *No. I haven't worked on projects in my home country since I graduated.*

> *I wish I have the chance to work on my own country too.*

Especially the last group of respondents hints toward a discussion about the possible effect such 'broken home-country links' could have on consultants' work. It can be assumed that still a majority of urban development consultants in international development are originally from industrialized countries – therefore, one could argue that such consultants' lack to work in their home countries may lead also to a lack of connection to the state of the art in their respective technical/sectoral disciplines, where good practice is still most often developed and defined by experts in industrialized countries. If consultants do not keep pace with these developments, they cannot – at least from personal interaction – transfer improved techniques, methodologies, technologies, or skills to their project cities.

On the other hand, one could argue that many project contexts are of such different setting to industrialized countries that concerned consultants would not gain much anyhow from sustaining the active knowledge or practice link to their home country.

Or, differently, it could be argued that some project countries have reached a developmental state (e.g. China or South Africa) that good practice or new solutions actually emerge out of these countries and flow into industrialized countries, instead of the other way around (cf. Chapter 2). Still, in such a case, a lack of interlinkage between different settings would be regrettable.

Nevertheless, since half of the respondents indicate that they actually do bring back some solutions or lessons learned to their home countries, the image should not be painted too dark. Also there is an increasing number of international consultants not coming from industrialized countries, but from other developing countries, which also gives a different meaning to the underlying idea of the question. One illustrative response was as follows:

> *After 15 years in Lesotho pioneering low cost sanitation, labor-intensive construction, small contractor development, and the policy and legislative changes needed, I returned to South Africa and helped inform the political commitment to these approaches in the newly established democratic government in the 1990s.*

> *I have taken experience in my home city, Accra, Ghana, and applied lessons learnt in my work in Cotonou, Benin. Both cities have similar cultural profiles except that social discipline in Cotonou is much stronger than in Accra.*

What can be concluded from the discussion about the experience of consultants and their home-country links is that the decision to work in international development projects often represents a commitment to this particular sector. Due to different sets of expertise and skills it is usually not common to find consultants who work in countries of very different socio-economic settings and for public and private sector in both developmental and profit-oriented projects. While it is not a key focus of this report, this is an important aspect characterizing individual consultant biographies. In combination with the results on consultants' sources of technical knowledge this provides some interesting empirical findings that can inform future research.

Chapter 7.   Consultants' Perceptions

Studying the perception that consultants have of their work, work context, and work sector, the survey included 32 value statements for which respondents had to indicate their dis-/ agreement. It goes beyond the scope of this report to analyze every single value statement. Besides, some relate to the same topic and aspect and/or were just phrased differently in order to not create an unintentional bias in a certain direction. The methodological idea was to arrive at a wide picture of perceptions and identify in which way respondents are tentatively leaning.

Exemplary value statements that achieved highest agreement rates are the following:

Special local knowledge and practices are crucial to a project's success.

Every new project requires me to think anew about possible solutions to a city's challenges.

I treat every city as a unique place.

Exemplary value statements that achieved the lowest agreement rates are the following:

My work is solely technical and does not touch political issues.

Due to the tasks that I have to perform in my work, I can copy-paste some content from one project to another.

Local stakeholders very often oppose suggested project activities.

Based on the agreement rates of the 32 value statements, a summarizing interpretation along the following three themes can be provided.

1) **Practice**: Respondents identify a common set of urban development challenges, which trigger recommendations that are similar from city to city. At the same time, respondents place much importance on working out context-tailored solutions that are based on local conditions and that consider alternatives. This context-sensitivity and engagement with local aspects has, however, its limits with regard to the time that is available for respondents to deliver their project outputs. Nevertheless, respondents refute copy-and-paste work approaches.
2) **Knowledge**: Respondents compare the cities they have worked in. They actively apply good practices (international ones or their own). The mobility of related knowledge and experience is much based on forms of informal knowledge sharing among peers, while more regular formats, such as training or participation in community of practices, are less common.
3) **Impact**: The survey results point toward a feeling of respondents seeing themselves, as well as project-affected groups, to have only limited influence on broader contexts and the decision-making by project owners. Respondents show a concern that projects lack sustainability as they are implemented as 'one-shot' initiatives. Beyond technical matters, there is a perception of the projects being inherently political. Respondents underscore the relevance of their work with regard to the international development agendas and their impact on projects.

These results can be interpreted for the three respondent groups of junior, mid-career, and senior consultants.

1) **Junior**: One could broadly describe those with less than 10 years of work experience as **'change-making perceivers'** – they seem to be keen to look for alternatives, thrive to change practices, and further development agendas, but due to their still limited skills, experience, and location-specific knowledge, they are dependent on more senior consultants and national (local) consultants for guidance and inputs.
2) **Mid-Career**: Those between 10 and 25 years of work experience appear as **'knowledge-advancing technicians'** – they are motivated to advance the technical expertise in their

sectors, but they feel restricted in their projects, as they have to perform solely technical tasks with limited impact on the context.

3) **Senior**: Respondents with more than 25 years of work experience may be described as **'struggling masters'** – they feel committed to developing case-specific solutions based on in-depth project work, but they are restrained by time and other aspects and do not show much thrive to engage in knowledge sharing and training beyond their particular projects.

Two other questions dealt with the topic of expectations. Respondents had to answer open questions about: i) their clients' expectation toward their (consultants') work (Figure 7.1); and ii) their own expectation toward their (consultants') work (Figure 7.2). Interesting differences between the two sets of expectations can be identified. Open responses were clustered into larger categories to facilitate comparison. However, not all these categories are the same, since responses to the two open questions differed in content.

Respondents describe their clients' key expectation toward their work as being strongly focused on providing professional work in the sense of delivering a project and its outputs on time, within budget, meeting all standards, 'ticking all boxes', and pushing out the deliverables (Figure 7.1). This is illustrated in the following exemplary quotes:

> *What is your clients' key expectation toward your work?*
>
> > *Follow guidelines.*
> >
> > *Deliver output on time, to required standard and within budget.*
> >
> > *Achieve the clients' goals, on time, within budget, spend all the money, satisfy all the "nice-to-haves" that are imposed by parliamentary committees, gender and environmental activists etc., even when there is no budget.*

This key expectation is at the top of the survey responses, followed by expectations of "improving quality of outputs" and "providing independent expert advice and inputs" on second and third rank with only or less than half as many replies than "providing professional work".

Other expectations rank even lower. However, among these less mentioned expectations are items related to "achieving improved cities and lives", which one could expect to rank far higher, as many of the concerned clients actually define in their urban development agendas objectives in the direction of developing sustainable or livable cities and improving the living conditions for all in cities.

Figure 7.1: Perceived Clients' Key Expectation toward Respondents' Work
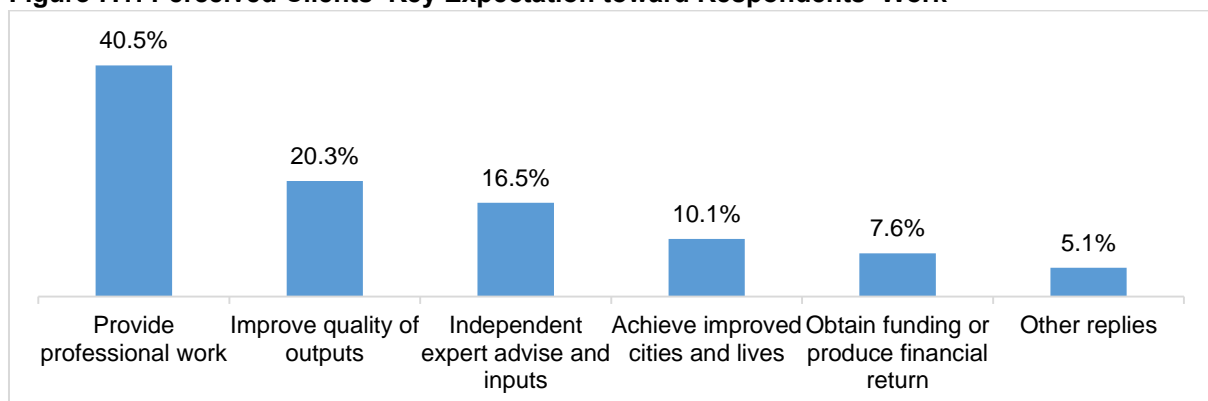
Source: Author.

The picture of respondents' own expectation toward their work looks different (Figure 7.2). Three clustering response categories rank nearly even. At the top is "achieving improved cities and lives" with "improving quality of outputs" and "providing professional work" following on second and third

rank. In contrast, a forth response item with about 14% refers to responses that mentioned the expectation of "engaging, collaborating with, and capacitating stakeholders". The following exemplary answers from the survey illustrate this picture of respondents themselves aiming for livable cities, providing good technical work and professional services in a balanced way:

What is your own expectation toward your work?

> *To do the best I can, within the circumstances, for the benefit of the highest number of people.*

> *Provide quality and context specificity in the work I do. Leads to useful results. Impacts lives.*

> *Deliver the results within the given time frame and within the given budget, while leaving a long lasting impact on the entities, people and communities involved.*

Figure 7.2: Respondents' Own Expectation toward Their Work
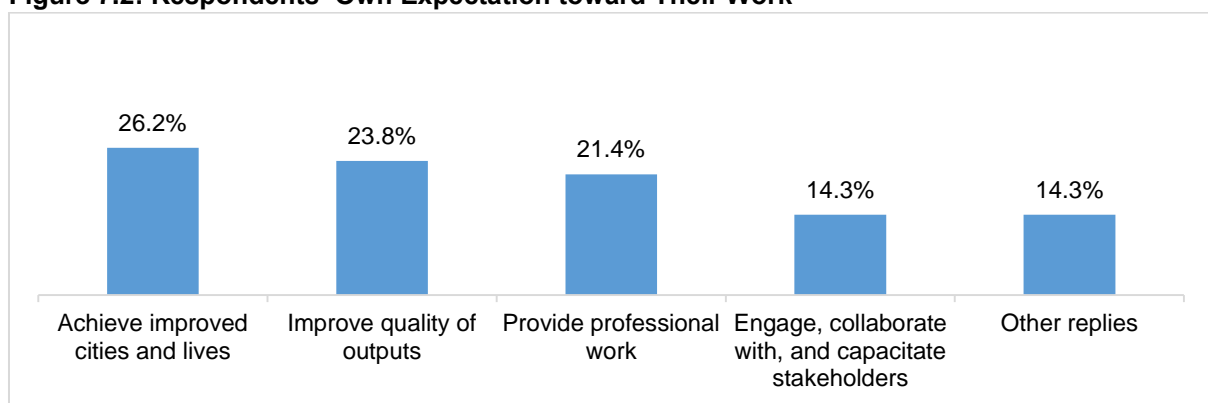
Source: Author.

Respondents also had to answer an open question about what aspects characterize a positive urban development project and then indicate how often their own projects fulfill these criteria. The open answers are too varied to be presented here, but they are basically in line with how international development organizations define sustainable urban development projects; i.e. projects with resource-efficient, technically sound sub-projects, designed in a cross-sectoral way, based on stakeholder engagement, with tangible benefits for citizens, and capacitated local counterparts. Respondents, however, do not all believe to fulfill these criteria in their own work (Figure 7.3). About two fifths of them state that their projects always or often live up to the standards of a positive urban development project, while 30% see this to be the case only sometimes, 10% state to achieve the standards only rarely, and close to one fifth cannot tell.

Although rare, some respondents were very explicit when providing further elaboration in the comments section below that question, as exemplified in the following responses to the question how often their own projects result in positive urban development projects:

> *On paper: 90%, in practice (as subsequently applied) 35% if lucky, although this greatly depends on client.*

> *Not often – other international agencies might have different agendas that encourage clients to take short cuts to achieve targets that undermine long term objectives.*

> *Maybe 50% of the time; basically all projects get done, but the ownership, participation, and building of local capacities may vary.*

> *Very often the Terms of References of projects are BADLY WRITTEN. If the set-up prevents from doing any useful job at all, I will not take the assignment. If it*

allows to achieve some benefit for beneficiaries, sometimes despite the mediocre project concept, I may take it on, and try my best at it. But it usually costs a lot of energy. I strongly have the feeling that the younger generation of real field practitioners is not being 'raised' (in practice). That there is an older generation that is now nearly fading away (the ones earning their experience during the 70s and 80s), but who still dominate the practical field. Those who come from academia usually have no clue. And can create true disasters (and get away with them!).

Figure 7.3: Perceived Fulfillment Rate of Positive Urban Development Projects by Respondents
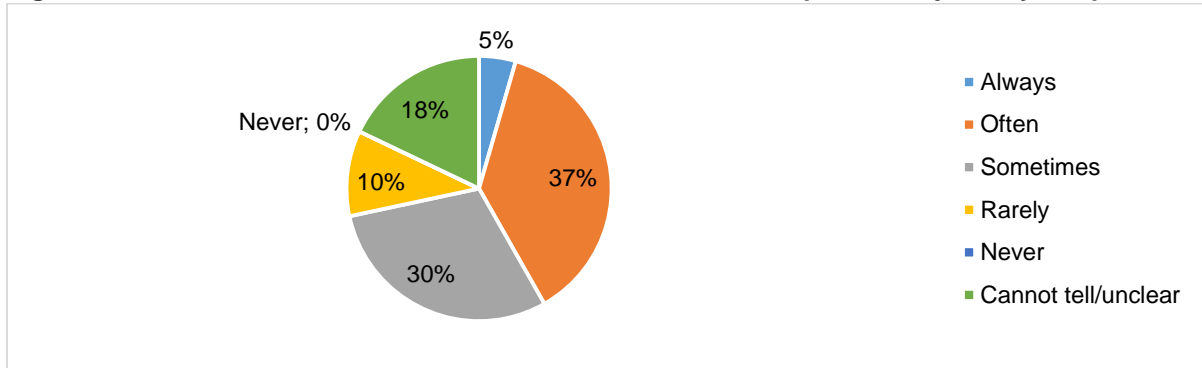
Source: Author.

Concluding from these results on consultants' perceptions is rather difficult, as perceptions themselves are hard to research and interpret. This area requires in-depth qualitative analysis of consultants that goes beyond the tentative characterizing of junior, mid-career, and senior consultants that was proposed in this chapter. Nevertheless, the initial findings paint a picture of consultants in urban development projects in international development as reflected and critically thinking experts. Processes of urban policy mobility are complex and a sensitivity to local contexts exists. There are multiple interlinkages and even interdependencies among consulting colleagues, between international and national consultants, as well as between consultants and their project owners, project clients, and project-affected people. The political element in the work is recognized, but differences exist between junior, mid-career, and senior consultants in this regard, which requires more research. As will be further discussed in the conclusion, the differing – to a certain extent even contrasting – expectations that respondents perceive as their own versus those of their project clients is one of the most critical findings of this report.

Chapter 8.   Consultants' Motivation

Similar to the questions on respondents' work perception, questions about their motivation were formulated as 26 value statements for which respondents had to indicate their dis-/ agreement. Each statement started with the phrase "I perform this work because…" followed by a motivational aspect ranging from material aspects, such as salary, to features related for instance to their work context.

Exemplary value statements that achieved highest agreement rates are the following:

I perform this work because I like urban development topics.

I perform this work because I help improve people's lives.

I perform this work because I actually contribute to the improvement of a particular project city.

Exemplary value statements that achieved the lowest agreement rates are the following:

I perform this work because I need the experience to successfully apply for a different job/position.

I perform this work because I find most assignments easy to perform.

I perform this work because I like to grow my own business.

Based on the agreement rates of the 26 value statements, a summarizing interpretation along the following three themes can be provided.

1) **Context**: Respondents exemplify an interest, if not even a fascination, in urban development work in the international development context. The variety of work, cultures, locations, the opportunities to travel and to make new experiences, and to do so even at a high age, provide contextual aspects for their motivation. Furthermore, the good salary is recognized.

2) **Commitment**: Another aspect can be found in respondents' development thrive or even responsibility to improve living conditions and to make a positive contribution, while also furthering international development agendas. Respondents are engaged with their international development projects and they do not see these as an alternative or as better than non-developmental work or outside assignments.

3) **Skills**: In addition to the above two aspects, respondents also embody a strong interest in applying their technical skills, trying out good practices, working on the ground (rather than doing policy work), improving techniques, and taking lessons back to their peers. The preferred focus is on practical work, with a back-and-forth between practice and research not indicated to play a significant role.

While many differences can be found between junior, mid-career, and senior consultants in the survey, most of these mostly confirm general assumptions of consultants (or employees in general) at different stages of their career.

1) **Junior**: For respondents with less than 10 years of work experience, the following value statements were rated above the average rates of all respondents together: good salary; using project findings in own research work; help to improve people's lives; experience to successfully apply for a different job/position; and constantly new project context exciting them. On the other hand, their motivation – in comparison to mid-career and senior consultants – stems less from on-the-ground work and good practice application. They do not yet have a geographical specialty or preference that makes them particularly motivated for their work. Also, they do not indicate to perform the job to grow their own business. Their feeling of independent advisory work is below survey sample average as well.

2) **Mid-Career**: Respondents between 10 and 25 years of work experience are more along the average results. Above-average rates in comparison to the whole survey sample were similar to junior respondents with regard to the use of project findings in their own research work. Similar to their description as 'knowledge-advancing technicians' in Chapter 7, they are driven by the opportunities to apply their technical skills directly to a project, and they are motivated by their geographical specialization. They are the group that – in comparison to junior and senior consultants in the survey – sees the work as providing some variety to other assignments outside the international development context. And they show more motivation than the other groups regarding the opportunity to use the work to grow their own business.

3) **Senior**: The group of respondents with more than 25 years of work experience sees particular value in independent advisory work to project cities – a motivation they share with mid-career consultants in the survey. Although still not very much agreeing to it, they show a higher agreement rate to the statement that most assignments are easy to perform for them. They like the application of good practices in the field and they cherish to work in exciting projects at a high age. However, they show below-average agreement regarding the work-related travels to different countries. Furthermore, they do not see their work as providing variety to outside assignments beyond international development work, and – obviously at their stage in career – they also do not support the statement of needing the experience to successfully apply for a different job/position.

Similar to the interpretation of consultants' perceptions in this survey, drawing conclusions from consultants' motivation can at best be understood as a first step toward better understanding how and why they perform their work. Individual biographies differ widely, although the stereotypical image of consultants in international development work, which can be found across the critical geography literature (cf. Chapter 2), can be questioned in its simplification and mix-up of individual consultants' motivation (and purposes) versus broader project concept and project design aspects that impact on how work is performed and to which results it leads. Juxtaposing the findings about consultants' motivation with the perceived differing and partly opposing expectations of consultants and project clients illuminates the understanding of contextuality. Respondents in this survey show a positive and committed attitude toward their work, but broader settings in each project will be more or less conducive in applying/utilizing these motivations to their best practical potential.

Chapter 9.   Conclusion

Drawing a conclusion for this research on consultants in urban development projects in international development can best be done by referring back to the guiding questions.

Who are 'the' consultants in urban development projects in international development?

The diversity among urban development consultants in international development renders a discussion about 'the' consultant(s) rather useless. There is a broad variety of expertise, including more recent and emerging thematic fields such as heritage rehabilitation, urban mobility, or smart technologies. Although different types of project clients/partners are active in the field of urban development, multi-lateral development banks show a certain dominance in the survey results. Comparing this finding to the number of both technical assistance and loan projects that these banks process and implement each year, it has to be concluded that they are defining actors in international development projects in the urban sector. Correspondingly, their pool of and relation with consultants is of particular relevance when the role of development consultants in urban advisory services is to be studied further. It is positive to see that the ratio is leaning toward more national-(local)-consultant teams, potentially hinting at an increasing capacity in developing countries. In addition to that, more consultants from developing and emerging economies enter the field of international consultancy, which will likely change the ethnic make-up of the group of international consultants and also have an influence on the set of skills, experiences, good practices, work approaches, perceptions, and motivations, which were studied in this research. Multi-lateral development banks have the power and managerial means to further diversify the group of consultants in their (urban) projects by posting positions in a (larger) variety of networks and channels. The terms of reference (TOR) in (urban) development projects would benefit from allowing for more diverse teams particularly with regard to geographical origin, age, and gender. Also, there are still many urban sub-sectors and thematic areas (cf. emerging fields mentioned above), where development actors can become active to broaden the conceptual understanding and practice of 'urban' development projects.

How do urban development consultants approach and execute their work?

Discussions will continue around the topic of how consultants distribute their time and other resources, and the related prioritization of tasks by consultants, project owners, or project clients, which indirectly also impact on the importance that is assigned to different project outputs and outcomes. Consultants in this survey seem to spend much time on project management-related tasks, including both administrative matters and reporting responsibilities. Actual technical work, on-site presence and field inspections, as well as stakeholder and community engagement through workshops and other formats are attributed the least amount of time – possibly because they do require less time, or because priorities in urban development projects are set differently. Much scrutiny by project officers is needed when designing their projects, formulating terms of reference (TOR), and allocating resources to allow for proper engagement of consultants with the physical and social environment of the cities they work in.

What role do other stakeholders play in their work? How do urban development consultants perceive these stakeholders?

The survey presents a positive picture of rich interaction between consultants and project stakeholders. This interaction is biased toward decision-making actors, but respondents show that they work also with other groups and are open to 'non-traditional' actors, for instance, from the

private sector, the youth, or the media. Respondents are also aware of the current shortcomings of actively engaging such groups in their projects. The reasons for that are rooted in less-conducive political systems, in perceptions – or better to say: misperceptions – of the preparedness, capabilities, and credibility of concerned stakeholder groups, and in the design and methodological approach of projects. Aspects of perception raise the question about who should and can take (more) responsibility in capacitating non-traditional and less powerful stakeholder groups to enable them to participate more (effectively) in urban development projects. With contexts varying widely and international consultants being limited with regard to local languages and knowledge, the role of local experts – be it project counterparts, national (local) consultants, interpreters, or other project stakeholders – remains crucial for truly participatory approaches and the effective implementation and sustainability of international development projects.

What role does knowledge play in their work? Where do urban development consultants get it from? How do they share it?

Responses in the survey draw the two-fold picture of consultants comparing project cities with each other, seeing similar problem sets, and promoting similar solutions, while also approaching each project city as a unique place, looking into local specificities, and developing context-tailored solutions. In order to achieve this, good practice and/or local knowledge needs to flow between projects, consultants, and other concerned stakeholder groups. As a readily available source, online reading will increase in importance, as digitization extends and also urban development and international development become increasingly captured and monitored online. Nevertheless, respondents express value in exchanging in person experiences and lessons learned with peers and colleagues. However, the relevance of that is not equally shared by junior, mid-career, and senior consultants. Furthermore, there is a lack of systematization and regularity in knowledge management and sharing. Much knowledge transfer happens informally, which is completely fine when it happens, but which causes problems when it does not happen. Formal formats have been introduced across institutions and sectors, but it will require further efforts, especially by consultants' project clients – i.e. international organizations etc. – to require its project teams to capture lessons from projects for broader sectoral and institutional learning. In addition, the differences between the respondents have indicated that junior consultants would benefit more from guidance and advice provided by more experienced consultants. At the same time – although senior consultants did not express it too much in the survey – more experienced consultants can also benefit from this teaming up with younger colleagues, as they will learn more about newer approaches and technologies useful for their projects.

Why do urban development consultants work in international development?

Studying respondents' motivation to perform work in urban development projects in international development has revealed positive results. Consultants seem to differentiate themselves from more private sector-oriented management consultants. Although the empirical comparative analysis is still needed, the survey findings in light of existing research work allows for the concluding image of international development consultants having a feeling of commitment and responsibility toward sustainable and livable cities and furthering the international development agendas. There are differences between generations, with the more senior 'struggling masters' being more engaged with local specificities, mid-career 'knowledge-advancing technicians' being more concerned about the improvement of good practice, and junior 'change-making perceivers' being more driven by alternative newer approaches toward livable cities. Instead of seeing these motivations in conflict with each other, it is more fruitful and also more practice-/project-oriented to see them as complimentary in implementing urban development projects that include different

perspectives, skills, and approaches, cater to different needs, and ensure the effective deployment of consultants. Instead of highly senior consultant teams, it may be time to reconfigure the usual team composition toward more age- and experience-varied, as well as gender-varied teams.

How do urban development consultants perceive their work/work context? How do they relate to these?

There is a discrepancy between respondents' own expectation toward their work and what they see as their project clients/partners' expectation from their work. Although such differences are natural, the significance of these are worrisome. With a majority of respondents in the survey indicating multi-lateral development banks as their key project clients, the results should be read from that angle. And since multi-lateral development banks have much impact on how urban development projects are done in developing countries, a discussion about expectations has to be lead. The question emerges why these project clients/partners are perceived by consultants as caring so much about the basic delivery upon the terms of reference (TOR) – in the sense of sending in reports, spending the money, and keeping to schedule. This may be a simplified description of how projects are done, but it points at two key aspects: How can the design of projects be adjusted to steer their outcomes more effectively toward livable cities, improving the lives of urban dwellers, and capacitating local stakeholders? And how can project clients reposition themselves and adjust their relation and communication with consultants as service providers in order to make use of consultants' motivations (see above) to make cities better places to live in? Asking respondents in the survey about what constitutes a positive urban development project, the replies suggest that the narrow delivery of outputs is not sufficient. Even more, one could argue, the delivery of outputs hardly ever poses the main problem in urban development projects. Instead, it is the ownership of project counterparts, the engagement of project stakeholders, and the co-development of context-tailored, feasible, and sustainable solutions that are lacking. From the survey results, one could think that there is more potential within the community of urban development consultants which waits to be unleashed if it is correspondingly encouraged and directed toward the project outcomes. In this discussion, it is also necessary to open up the black box of project clients/partners, because large-scale institutions such as multi-lateral development banks have complex internal institutional settings and relations, which make above-suggested improvements not that easy or straightforward to implement. For instance, project officers have to meet many different (and possibly opposing) expectations with regard to their client country's government, their department's portfolio targets, their institution's broader strategic goals, their technical peer group's agenda, their consultants' demands, etc.

Concluding Remarks

This research can only be seen as a first step in developing a better understanding of consultants in urban development projects in international development. On the academic research side as well as from an institutional or human resource perspective, this report can inform future studies and surveys. Furthermore, some arguments, interpretations, and conclusions of this research are meant to trigger a discussion, particularly among project officers and within their international development organizations. It is not so much about pointing at a highly critical or negative situation. There is an abundance of good urban development projects. However, monitoring and evaluation reports, as well as studies like these can inform project concepts and designs and, thus, assist in improving the utilization of valuable resources – let it be financial resources, time resources, or human resources (as in consultants).

Appendix: Types of International Development Consultants

The following table presents a first draft version for stereotypically characterizing different types of international development consultants. While it may be an interesting, illustrative, or amusing description, it was dropped at the first stage of the research project as it was not conducive to an open, less pre-conceived analysis that would allow for a more empirically grounded understanding.

The table spans across two pages.

Type of Consultant	Short Description	Objective
The tech nerd	- Highly specialized knowledge and experience in one sector/discipline - Reasonably up-to-date regarding technological advances in this sector	- Doing technically sound projects/getting the ‚nuts-and-bolts‘ of a project right - Spreading ‚good practice‘ across project places
The dinosaur	- Extensive career experience in international development work - Has seen numerous countries, political and other changes/reforms - Has worked beyond retirement age	- Achieving project deliverables on time - Sustaining good relations to all project actors - Taking no unnecessary risk
The former IO staff (IO=international organization)	- Has mostly worked on the IO side - Sees some appeal in consulting work vis-à-vis IO staff work	- Continuing the work/legacy started in IO - Going back to the (technical) roots at the beginning of the career
The future IO staff	- Is often in early stages of career - Eyes an IO employment, for which consulting experience is favored - Often comes with a fresh stock of academic knowledge	- Learning from more experienced consultants - Becoming acquainted to other project actors - Infusing some change
The conformant	- Has established a stable life in consulting job - Feels at ease to adopt whatever new approaches are advocated - Can adjust own skill set to new requirements	- Keeping project clients and partners pleased to secure further jobs - Having an open ear for new developments - Positively engaging in other people‘s projects
The professor	- Is often teaching (and researching) at the university - At some point came into contact with IO and its work or a particular project - Switches between different roles of theorist and practitioner	- Applying ‚good practices‘ from school to real-world context - Getting exposure and empirical findings in field - Advising others on better ways to do things
The ranger	- Is often deeply emerged in project context over many consecutive years - Tends to reside in project country, with personal ties beyond work context - Got to know the work rather from a hands-on exposure to actual project implementation than desk work	- Giving something back to the loved project country - Implementing projects at local scale - Play the facilitator between local and global knowledge etc.
The jetsetter	- Understands the IO consulting job as any other consulting job, with deliverables and remuneration - Engages in several projects in different countries and regions at the same time - Tends to apply copy-paste approaches across the projects wherever ‚similarities‘ can be identified	- Getting the job done quickly - Achieving good/sufficient job performance rating - Providing insights from other work contexts to current project

Relation to Project Country (=the country where the project is implemented)	Relation to Project Partners (="project beneficiaries", local stakeholders)	Relation to Project Client (=international organization or similar funding the project)
- Solely technical, thus legal, natural, social and other features are of interest if they interrelate with the technology	- Potentially ,teacher'-like - Intensive engagement due to work style in (smaller) teams and possible dependence on translation	- professional, although with doubts about clients' knowledge - Thin-skinned about keeping technical field with little interference
- Strongly based on past project experience	- Intimate and whole-heartedly - Based on shared experiences and previously established relationships - Strong networks	- Trustful and based on numerous previous projects - Collegial - With potential advisory role - Maybe conflict of project hierarchy
- Based on previously IO work - Strongly linked to government side	- Professional and potentially based on previous partnerships, especially with government side - Developmental perspective on people	- close, based on previous IO work - Maybe conflict of project hierarchy - Regarded in high terms - Very easy based on knowledge of IO procedures
- Very limited - Maybe based on previous studies or traveling - Open interest in new context/cultures	- Curious and mostly unknowledgeable - Developmental perspective on people	- Supportive and loyal to a certain degree - With much effort on establishing good work relations - Unequal power relations
- Positive and practical - Open-hearted to people, but less engaged with overall country development	- Friendly and interested - Negotiating between local concerns and broader project objectives	- Good and easy-going - Based on knowledge of IO procedures - Personally friendly , but professionally not much creative
- Mostly based on previous studies and possible field trips - From an analytical point of view - Particularly with comparative perspective	- Dedicated to participatory approaches - Potentially experienced based on field work - Potentially confusing due to academic working style and communication	- Shared thematic interests - Potential conflict due to different objectives, ideas, knowledge - Potentially power conflicts
- Very deep and based on personal experience and long engagement - Intensive, although not necessarily loving, depending on context - Close to people, potentially warry of government	- Very close, intimate, and possibly able to communicate in local language - More open and potentially direct - Seriously concerned for their matters	- Based on knowledge of IO procedures - Potentially with history of previous (fruitful) conflicts - Contentious, but solution-oriented
- Very limited - Based on basic facts and figures - Comparative perspective	- Deliverable perspective - Direct, outcome-oriented style - Following guidelines of IO	- Based on knowledge of IO procedures - Potentially well-established, but never close or enduring - Very professional

Source: Author.

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