



STATSVETENSKAPLIGA INSTITUTIONEN

## OWNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN AID PROJECTS

A qualitative study of workers perceptions of work methods, constraints and motives to ownership and participation reforms in the aid project Bai Bang

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## Abstract

The purpose of the essay is to develop a better understanding of aid-actors and implementors' perceptions of efforts to create ownership and participation in aid projects. In research and policy literature on international aid, the terms ownership and participation have emerged as fundamental components for ensuring the success of aid (Rabinowitz 2015, Kanji & Greenwood 2001, Brown 2017). Ownership and participation involve practices to give aid receivers the ability to exercise effective ownership, sense of empowerment and cooperation throughout the development of policies, actions, and ways of implementation in the aid project (Rabinowitz 2015).

There are however constraints to pursuing ownership and participation reforms, and literature suggests that ownership and co-decisiveness during aid relations is a complex matter where one has to weigh the pros and cons between ownership reforms and project performance (De Valk 2004, Mansuri and Rao 2013, Mansuri 2012). There is hence reason to investigate how these constraints appear, and how the possibilities with working methods shaped by ownership and participation materialize, when questioning implementors and actors who were present during an aid project.

By conducting interviews with workers from the former Swedish-Vietnamese aid project Bai Bang, this study develops the understanding of how implementors experience ownership and participation reforms, what the hindrances look like, and what the basic motives to the reforms are, from a perspective rarely investigated..

The results show that former research's frameworks for investigating ownership are relevant, and that the hindrances to ownership and participation in aid are experienced in a wide range and furthermore that the main motive to ownership reforms in Bai Bang was the practical use of co-decisiveness.

**Key words:** Ownership reforms, Participation reforms, Aid projects, The Bai Bang project, Constraints to ownership, Instrumentalist motives to ownership, Purist motives to ownership

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## Introduction

In research and policy literature on international aid, the terms ownership and participation have emerged as fundamental components for ensuring the success of aid (Rabinowitz 2015, Kanji & Greenwood 2001, Brown 2017). Ownership and participation involve practices to give aid receivers the ability to exercise effective ownership, sense of empowerment and cooperation between donor and receiver throughout the development of policies, actions, and ways of implementation in the aid project (Rabinowitz 2015).

There are however constraints to pursuing ownership and participation reforms, and literature suggests that ownership and co-decisiveness during aid relations is a complex matter where one has to weigh the pros and cons between ownership reforms and project performance (De Valk 2004, Mansuri and Rao 2013, Mansuri 2012). There is hence reason to investigate how these constraints appear, and how the possibilities with working methods shaped by ownership and participation materialize, when questioning implementors and actors who were present during an aid project.

Literature on participation and ownership furthermore tends to be either focused on how ownership plays out from a macro perspective (Brown 2017, Hasselskog et al. 2017), as in donor government to recipient government, or more focused on participation in small aid operations regarding a few actors in a local setting (Listening project 2011). There is also a tendency of the literature being of normative matter when reading about ownership in aid relations.

This study creates a better understanding of participation and ownership and their constraints and possibilities, through the lens of a group and case rarely investigated, i.e. a big aid project with many actors involved in the middle layer of the project.

The purpose of the essay is to develop a better understanding of the actors and implementors perceptions of efforts to create ownership and participation in aid projects. To accomplish this I have interviewed implementors from a big Swedish aid project, located in Vietnam. The aid project of Bai Bang is part of the humanitarian assistance and reconstruction-aid of Sweden to North Vietnam. The data for this study consists of qualitative interviews with nine former

workers from Bai Bang and the method of qualitative conversational interviews has captured the perceptions and insights of the actors.

This study has societal relevance from the perspective of popular history, as the case of Bai Bang is considered a successful and historically unique aid-project. Furthermore, this study has relevance for the understanding of aid relations and the motives to work with ownership reforms in aid. For the field of political science and the international study of aid, this study carry relevance in the way it is exploring workers perceptions of ownership and participation. Hopefully this contribution can create a deeper understanding of the complexities in aid relations and help shed light to what workers in aid actually think of the participation and ownership reforms. Since the literature puts weight on the importance of ownership reforms and tends to be normative in its nature, this study will help contextualize and materialize the concepts.

### Purpose and Research questions

The purpose of the essay is to develop a better understanding of the actors and implementors perceptions of efforts to create ownership and participation in aid projects. To develop a better understanding, I will be asking the following questions:

- *How did the working methods linked to participation and ownership manifest themselves in Bai Bang?*
- *What constraints did the actors and implementors from Bai Bang face with working methods shaped by ownership and participation?*
- *What are perceived as the basic motives for implementing participation and ownership reforms in Bai Bang?*

### Disposition

In the introductory chapter, a background of the subject and problem is discussed, which then leads to associated purpose and research questions of the essay. The section for theoretical background and research gap includes what scholars earlier has presented about ownership and participation in aid relations. First there is a presentation of the research gap in the subject, then a research overview, and lastly I explain my use of earlier research's frameworks.

The method chapter presents how I went about conducting my study, as well as justification for the choice of method. I also justify my choice of interviewees and pay attention to the problems I met along the way. The method chapter ends with discussions about limitations and ethical considerations. The results chapter presents the empirical data collected for my research from the qualitative interviews with workers from Bai Bang. I analyze and discuss results from the framework and theories continuously. In the conclusion, I summarize the essay, explain its contribution, describe the main shortcomings and ultimately make suggestions for future research.

## Theoretical background

### Research gap

Literature on participation and ownership tends to either be focused on the concepts from a macro perspective (Brown 2017, Hasselskog et al. 2017), as in donor government to recipient government, or more focused on participation in small aid operations regarding a few actors in a local setting (Listening project 2011). Rabinowitz (2015) argues that the concepts of ownership and participation are often promoted and investigated amongst a narrow group of actors. He argues that genuine investigation of ownership and participation in development aid, requires a widening of the scope of actors studied. Therefore I aim to participate to research with a better understanding of constraints and possibilities with participation and ownership, through the lens of a group rarely investigated, namely a very large aid project with a big scoop and many workers involved in the middle layer.

Researcher Stephen Brown (2017) explores constraints to ownership through the cases of Mali and Ghana. Brown follows the Paris Declaration description of ownership and announces the study conclusions on a macro level. He declares that recipient countries can exercise effective ownership if they first: practice effective leadership over the guidelines, strategies and coordinate development actions with the donors. This is a research example where ownership is exclusively investigated in the macro perspective, from aid donor-government to aid receiver-government.

The Collaborative Learning Projects (2011) has likewise explored the concepts of ownership and participation. They examined the experiences and insights of people who lived in societies

that have been recipients of development aid. They interviewed community members, non-governmental staff and society members in local aid programs. The team from Collaborative learning projects used an open-ended approach without pre-established questionnaires. They were interested in how local people experience and perceive efforts in aid programs shaped by the idea of ownership. The answers from the interviewees were then sectioned into different themes that all describe the recipient's opinions on how to best stimulate ownership in aid projects (in a normative way). This is an example of research studying ownership and participation in small aid operations regarding a few actors in a local setting.

These studies are related to the purpose of this essay, since they also do qualitative research on actors from aid projects. The purpose of this essay is to try and explore the scholars big weight on ownership and participation, by showing how ownership and participation was worked with and what the constraints and possibilities were, in the big aid project of Bai Bang. This study creates a better understanding of participation and ownership and their constraints and possibilities, through the lens of a group and case rarely investigated, i.e. a big aid project with many actors involved in the middle layer of the project.

### Research overview

It is essential to declare that there is no universally accepted definition of ownership or participation in the literature. However, literature agrees that ownership and participation involve practices to give aid receivers ability to exercise effective ownership and sense of empowerment through the entire aid process. Cooperation between donor and receiver throughout the development of policies, actions, and ways of implementation in the aid project (Rabinowitz 2015, World Bank 1996, Kanji and Greenwood 2001, NORAD 2013). According to Gideon Rabinowitz (2015), ownership and participation are part of a common agenda addressing the value, role, and impact of development aid. Literature on participation has focused on developing a schedule for recipient engagement at the *local level*, at the level of aid projects and the communities around them. The literature on ownership, on the other hand, has primarily focused on aid relations at a *national level*, i.e., national development programs as institutions. The literature is somewhat separate, but they both address the same need for transfer of knowledge, co-decisiveness and empowerment of the recipient throughout the entire process of an aid program. I will therefore use the terms ownership and participation synonymously.

There are much in common between the two terms. The principles of each term or agenda address the need to emphasize the degree of ownership and control experienced by the local actors. They both realize many actors are involved in the processes, and they both focus on the importance of pursuing ownership of and participation through all the development program phases (De Reznio 2008). Rabinowitz (2015) puts forth that genuine participation requires the engagement of an expanding circle of actors. From elites through to the workers and actors at the bottom of an aid project, onward to the community around the aid project. He goes on with proclaiming that to realize participation, one needs to identify all different actors and: share information, listen to views, involve actors in development planning and decision making, contribute to their capacity building and ultimately empower them to manage, control, and initiate the project.

Kanji and Greenwood (2001) have a model for participation that recognizes the fact that aid donors are present and are, in fact, active participants. They, therefore, emphasize the communal nature of participation. The model has five ascending levels, including 1) compliance, 2) consultation, 3) cooperation, 4) co-learning, and 5) collective action. The World Bank also has a model where ownership and participation proceeds through the following levels: 1) information sharing through documents and meetings, 2) listening and learning to beneficiary stakeholders, 3) joint assessments and needs, 4) shared decision-making in planning development interventions, 5) collaboration with beneficiaries to implement development interventions and 6) empowering beneficiaries and building their capacity to play their role (World Bank 1996). With this approach to participation, the importance of promoting local involvement through every stage of the development program is recognized.

### Norwegian Agency For Development's theoretical framework

The figure below is the Norwegian Agency for Developments framework for analyzing and operationalizing the categories and forms of ownership and participation. In the policy making and planning phase the form of participation is *shared processes to set priorities and plans*, and in the implementation phase of the project, the form of participation is *knowledge sharing and awareness raising*. In the monitoring and evaluation phase, the form of participation is *oversight and complaint making*.



<b>STAGE/CATEGORY OF PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>FORM OF PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP (EXAMPLES)</b>
DESIGN, POLICY MAKING, BUDGETING AND PLANNING	Shared hearings and processes to set priorities and plans
IMPLEMENTATION/ SERVICE DELIVERY	Information and knowledge sharing, awareness raising
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Oversight committees, available complaint making, shared monitoring of work

*Figure 1*

*Framework for participation by Norwegian Agency for Development*

This framework will work as my main analysis frame, as it will help me get answers to how working methods linked to participation and ownership manifested themselves at Bai Bang, since I can create my interview guide from the different forms and categories listed by NORAD.

So, how do I investigate ownership and participation in aid? I have to understand and have a clear idea of where forms of ownership can occur to be able to ask my interviewees the right questions, without any normative undertones. The NORAD framework will help me investigate workers perceptions of ownership. This is because of its helpful way of dividing the term into categories explaining where in the project stage they can occur and its stating of examples of forms of participation and ownership (see figure 1).

Since this paper want to examine how the working methods linked to participation and ownership manifested themselves at Bai Bang (research question 1), my theoretical framework will help me structure the different phases in a project where expressions of participation and ownership can occur. I have therefore chosen the framework from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD 2013), because they have a clear and useful way of targeting all the stages where ownership may occur. They have come up with a framework for different stages of the project where forms of participation and ownership can materialize

(examples). The framework lists different themes of ownership across the aid program and then lists a few examples of the specific expression of ownership and participation. The framework is described as a method to examine ownership and participation in several contexts and cases.

### Constraints to ownership and participation

The second research question I want to get answers to is how the constraints of ownership and participation appeared to the implementors at the aid project of Bai Bang (research question 2). To be able to examine this I will now illustrate what earlier research has said about constraints.

Literature on constraints to pursuing ownership and participation identifies a range of donor and receiver practices which can undermine the work with these approaches, which can occur during different parts of the project phase. The following sections contains short descriptions of what former research has identified as the biggest constraints to pursuing ownership and participation.

One of the key constraints to further ownership and participation is the donors focus on compliance and their tendency for *risk-averse culture*. The risk aversion is also proven to be one of the factors to drive the donors tendency for high levels of oversight and micro management and this is proven to undermine the ability of donors to strengthen partnership (Wood et al 2011).

The *inherent tensions in aid relationships* and donor control is another constraint to pursuing ownership and participation approaches. Donors in aid project have legitimate reasons for maintaining control and oversight of their aid interventions, and because of this, promoting ownership and participation have been undermined by the donors unwillingness to cede control. The aid relationship is fundamentally unequal where the donor voluntarily have to allow recipient control, and sometimes codetermination can even present a constraint to efficient running of a project and efficient change (de Valk 2004). The Listening Project (2011) gathered views from aid beneficiaries around the world in many different aid projects and they asked if the donors of aid were prepared to share their control over the project. Many interviewees raised the problem of donors failure to share responsibility and decision making powers with them, raising the constraints these behaviors constitutes to their empowerment to take ownership of the aid project.

There is also the constraint of *accountability issues and power inequality within the recipient community*. Participation and ownership issues with governance and accountability are relevant both at local and national levels. The literature often describes the solution to non-progressive development as if only donors worked more directly with communities close to the aid project, and not with self serving governments, the aid will be more progressive and durable (Rabinowitz 2015). There is however systems of power inequality and exclusion and patrimonialism at all levels of an aid project, posing a constraint to to promote ownership and participation in development. These problems create problems for donors in facing the tensions between pursuing aid-goals and at the same time tackle inequality and systems of exclusion with the recipient.

Another constraint to pursuing ownership and participation in aid can be *knowledge of context and flexibility issues* from the donor side. Knowledge of context and ability to adapt aid projects responsiveness to contextual challenges is important to effectively promote ownership and participation. Mansuri and Rao (2013) raise concerns about how many development agencies does not succeed in these requirements. If donors don't pay attention to the social, technical, cultural and political context, their ability to address challenges within the project and challenges to achieve change, are severely undermined.

The listed constraints above adds a depth to the NORAD analysis framework as it describes what the constraints to ownership and participation can look like. The literature does however not say during which form of participation and ownership the constraints can occur, so I will assume that the problems are comprehensive and can affect all parts of the ownership processes. As listed above, there are lots of problems with working with ownership and participation in aid projects. The problems can come in different parts of the project phase. The examples of constraints lists these problems and the NORAD framework constituted the analysis for different parts of the project. The NORAD framework and the theories on constraints are relevant as they both help me formulate relevant questions as to how ownership was worked with, and also help me spot what the constraints looked like.

### **Instrumentalist and purist approaches to ownership and participation**

Another interesting aspect to ownership and participation in aid are the motives to why one should promote working methods shaped by these ideas. The following section is a description

of the overall value of and motives to ownership and participation. This part in the theory-section is necessary to be able to correctly analyze my answers and get answers to research question number three, what are the basic motives to ownership and participation in aid (research question 3).

Why is methods of ownership and participation important and what do they add to development efforts? Two main schools have emerged amongst scholars when addressing these questions. The first one views ownership and participation as fundamental rights and goals in themselves. The main aim for ownership and participation is hence a purist approach for collective action, empowerment and institution building (Pretty 1995). The second school has an instrumentalist approach and views these concepts as important due to their ability to broader development objectives, such as poverty targeting, the sustainability of development projects and making aid more effective.

I will now describe the instrumentalist view and explore the contributions that ownership and participation approaches has made to achieving development goals beyond the purist views of the concepts.

Although efforts to support ownership and participation in aid projects have a long history, it is only in the last decade that questions addressing the degree to which the concepts have helped to improve aid effectiveness have begun to be addressed by research (Mansuri and Rao 2013). One of the claims for participation and ownership approaches to development interventions is that they *help to improve the functions of the poor*. This claim explains that bringing projects close to communities and local actors makes it easier to make sure these groups benefit from aid. Research on bringing people out of poverty also proves that these people are more likely to own some land, get some schooling and get more well connected (Mansuri and Rao 2013).

Another prominent claim for the benefits of participation and ownership in aid projects is that they can help to *improve effectiveness and sustainability* of the aid. This claim explains that bringing projects closer to actors in a local communities, and making them identify their needs, will more likely make the project sustainable. The aid projects become sustainable because of the local actors sense of commitment and involvement in the projects and also because of the usage of local knowledge. Mansuri (2012) uses data from Pakistan and finds that infrastructure in and around aid projects are better designed if the local communities have a say in the

construction. Development aid focused on participation and ownership often aims to build long-term capacity of the communities they engage.

Studies of how participation and ownership helps build civil society capacity emphasize the difficulty to measure social outcomes linked to participation and ownership. Former research claims that there are challenges in measuring subtle capacity, social changes, and identifying comparator projects and communities to include in impact evaluations. There is however research on how participation and ownership can strengthen civil society. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) did a systematic review with evidence from 100 research studies on citizen engagement programs with focus on participatory aid. They found that participation and ownership approaches has positive impact on strengthening civil society, in three out of four cases, with the most common positive outcome in the micro level with actors within the close society of the aid project.

Evidence on the impact of participation and ownership efforts on development outcomes are proven largely positive. The strongest evidence from scholars on the concepts is the impact of participatory approaches contributions to program effectiveness and sustainability. Where local actors have been able to develop all the appropriate knowledge and skill they need to engage fully and effectively with the aid project, and where local elites don't capture the program, are the cases with most proven program effectiveness. But in general, the evidence linking participation and ownership in development to development results, such as welfare improvements and poverty reduction, is weak. This is due to methodological challenges in exploring the subjects and a limited number of studies made in the field (Rabinowitz 2015).

### The case of Bai Bang

Despite the fact that the Bai Bang project was both the biggest, most costly and one of the longest lasting aid-projects of Swedish history (1970-1995), the project is regarded a case of well performed aid (Sida 2006). Bai Bang is currently one of the largest and most productive paper mills in Vietnam (Scandasia 2017) and it was built with initial idea of solidarity, as the common agenda was cooperation between the countries of Vietnam and Sweden.

It is difficult to create ownership in aid projects because of the donors superior position and the inherent power tensions in aid relationships (De Valk 2004). Bai Bang is a case where the power

relations were unequal, as in all aid relations, but at the same time did the project have a clear and pronounced idea of solidarity, recipient orientation and the fostering of empowerment with the Vietnamese (Sida 2006).

The power relations were not only unequal because of the inherent inequality in the aid relationship between donor and recipient, but also because Vietnam at that time was a war ridden country with poor infrastructure, widespread poverty and “top down” governance (Sida 1999).

One of the projects main objectives was to transfer responsibility and knowledge to the Vietnamese. Sida describes the importance of assisting the Vietnamese part in reaching sustainable production, independent of Swedish support. And most importantly - to transfer knowledge and ownership to the Vietnamese personnel in a systematic way, parallel with the production continuously progressing. The transfer of knowledge was defined as “to actively pursue the systematic transfer of knowledge, to give advice daily on the job situations... to initiate ideas and stimulate technical and managerial creativity” with the Vietnamese (Sida 1999). All activities focused on contributing towards reaching the goal of sustainable Vietnamese operation.

Bai Bang is thus a case with semi poor conditions for the practice of ownership and participation. However, the project had clear ideas of working towards the recipient and their experience of ownership. Furthermore, we do know that the project is considered successful and stands on its own two feet today (Sida 2006). The proof that the project stands on its own, plus the fact that Sida describes a clear picture of recipient orientation leads to my conclusion that Bai Bang should be a case of successful practice of ownership and participation.

With this being said, the importance of naming Bai Bang a successful case of ownership reforms, is not very important for the purpose of the essay. As the essays purpose is to gather information about the constraints and possibilities of ownership and participation in aid and furthermore; to create an understanding of the complexity in how ownership and participation plays out, the assessment of if ownership and participation were successful at the mill, is not relevant. The fact that we have information stating that working methods in the project actually were shaped by ideas of recipient orientation and ownership, is enough.

If an aid project with no initial ideas and working methods shaped by recipient orientation or ownership would have been chosen as the case for this essay, I think the results would have been different. The Bai Bang case is a fitting case because of its success, the pronounced recipient orientation and its solidarity foundation. Actors from an aid project without clear ideas or documented methods of ownership and participation would probably not have been able to describe what the methods look like in practice, neither how the difficulties or constraints behave. The actors from the Bai Bang project all have information about the reality and problems with recipient orientation, while a project without such working methods would have been tougher to get the same depth of information from.

## Methodology

This study was mainly conducted in Hanoi and in Bai Bang, except for a few individual interviews made through digital devices, together with a visit to Bai Bang with the embassy of Sweden at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the aid project. The method consists of a qualitative interview study where the interviews constitute my main data.

### Method of choice

The purpose of the essay is to develop a better understanding of actors' perceptions of efforts to create ownership and participation in aid projects. I aim to, with the theory of participation and ownership, study the way actors in the aid project of Bai Bang worked with ownership reforms and therefore develop the understanding of what the possibilities and constraints with the concepts look like and what were perceived as the basic motives to ownership reforms. Since this paper aims to create a deeper understanding of the concepts of ownership and participation in aid projects, an empirical study of the workers and managers of an aid project is the most suited method.

A qualitative approach in the empirical study is useful when the goal is to gain deeper understanding of mechanisms and processes behind a phenomenon. The qualitative approach is also preferable in my case because of the complex nature of the concepts of ownership and participation in aid. A qualitative approach is suitable when studying abstract units or subjects, with inherent difficulties to statistically measure them (Esaiasson et al. 2017).

Interviews will be conducted with the goal to reach theoretical saturation (Esaiasson et al. 2017) and the semi structured framework will enable the interviewees to reason and talk more open about their perceptions and own thoughts about experiences of participation and ownership in the project. Theoretical saturation will be achieved when every extra interviewee does not contribute with new or different information about their experiences. The semi structured approach will guide the interviewees into the subjects I want to treat, but still give them room for more open reasoning.

### Selection of interviewees

The interviews has been conducted with workers and managers from the big aid project of Bai Bang. These are the people with first hand information about how policies shaped by ownership and participation tend to behave and are perceived in a big aid project. I have recruited both Swedish and Vietnamese people, with different work experience from the project, to capture a wide range of experiences. The interviewees was selected with focus on intensity due to all of them having real life experience in the project, and with maximal variation (Esaiasson et al. 2017), due to me conducting interviews with both managers, workers, interpreters, Swedes and Vietnamese. Furthermore, the interviewees have different durations and periods of involvement in the project, this will help me get a broad understanding of my research questions as different periods of the project might affect one's perceptions.

The workers and managers from Bai Bang are my main analysis objects and the data has been collected by interviews. I have mainly recruited interviewees through the Facebook group "Bai Bang- vi som bodde där", containing both Swedish and Vietnamese members with experience from working and living at Bai Bang. Additionally, our contact person in Vietnam has recommended a few people with experience from the project. It is helpful that the paper mill was celebrating its forty year anniversary during my stay and collection of data, this helped with the snowball-effect, meaning the workers and managers I met could provide contact information to more possible interviewees.

The interviews with the Vietnamese was conducted in person in English and the interviews with the Swedes was conducted in Swedish. The interviews was recorded after making sure the interviewee allowed it. In order to make sure that the person I was interviewing felt comfortable I made sure to let them know what my study was about and also gave them free hands to choose



the time and setting for the interview-occasion. Furthermore, I thoroughly explained that it was possible for them to terminate the interview at any time, if they in any way felt uncomfortable.

All of the interviews were conducted together with my research partner. We conducted the interviews together, cooperated in finding interviewees and transcribed the material together, but asked separate questions during the interviews, relating to each of our own separate subject.

Interviewee		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	V1	V2	V3	V4
Duration of Involvement	<3 years	X	X	X						
	3-8 years				X		X			
	9-25> years					X		X	X	X
Period of Involvement	1970-1974							X		
	1975-1982	X	X			X		X	X	X
	1982-1986				X	X	X	X	X	X
	1986-1995>			X		X		X	X	X
Working Position	Director				X			X		
	Manager			X		X	X			
	Worker	X	X							
	Interpreter			X					X	X
Part of Project	Paper Mill	X	X		X				X	X
	Forestry			X						
	Sub-Projects					X		X	X	X

Figure 2

*All the interviewees had Vietnamese/Swedish counterparts or colleagues.*

*S = Swedes, V = Vietnamese*

S1. *Painter* belonging to a Swedish work-team that was sent to Vietnam to educate surface protection treatment of materials for the construction of the paper mill.

S2. *Bookkeeper* at the warehouse, handling material for the paper mill.

S3. *Interpreter & Program Manager/Coordinator* with assignment to improve the forest workers' living conditions.

S4. *Chief Advisor at Scan Management* with assignment to coordinate the phasing-out of the Swedish involvement.

S5. *Sub-Project Manager* working with construction on various parts of the Bai Bang project.

V1. *Sub-Project Manager* working mainly with construction of housing area and school.

V2. *Paper Engineer & Principal of Vocational School* spending 18 months in Sweden for educational purposes via the Bai Bang project.

V3. *Interpreter* educated at Bai Bang, working in various parts of the Bai Bang project, including paper mill and the Swedish camp.

V4. *Secretary & Interpreter* educated at Bai Bang, working in office for maintenance.

*S = Swedes, V = Vietnamese*

### Operationalization and interview-guide

My analysis scheme has its core in the Norwegian Agency for Developments-framework (2013) but is developed further with help from the research about constraints and motives to ownership and participation reforms.

I use the NORAD framework (2013) as a basic structure to be able to access how workers perceived the work with ownership during the different stages of the aid process at Bai Bang. After the questions about each step of the aid process, I will also be asking questions about difficulties and motives for the working method described by the interviewee.

The interview-guide will revolve around finding answers for these following questions, along with any questions about clarification or details: *how did you work with planning/implementation/monitoring?, how did you perceive the hardships with the earlier stated part of the project (if there were any)? And, what do you consider to be the motives for the working method you described?*

Stages/Categories of participation and ownership according to NORAD	<i>How did you work with planning/implementation/monitoring?</i>	<i>How did you perceive the hardships with the earlier stated stage of the project (if there were any)?</i>	<i>What do you consider to be the motives for the working method you described?</i>
Design, policy making and planning	Shared hearings and processes to set priorities and plans	Risk-averse culture, inherent tensions in aid relationships,	Purist approach
Implementation/ Service delivery	Information and knowledge sharing, awareness raising	Power inequality within the recipient community	Instrumentalist approach
Monitoring and Evaluation	Oversight committees, complaint making and shared monitoring	Knowledge of context and flexibility issues	Purist approach

*Figure 3*

*My analytical framework developed from NORAD (2013)*

Blue represent all NORAD stages and green represent the questions I ask. In red are example answers based on earlier research. Each three questions are asked, in order, left to right, for each NORAD stage before moving on to the next stage.

I kept my interpretation of answers open and not too tied to earlier research’s examples when transcribing and coding my accumulated data, in case the interviewees present an experience

not fitting to earlier research on categories of-, constraints to- or motives to- ownership and participation (examples presented in red).

### Reliability and validity

Reliability of a qualitative study mean we can trust the data we have collected and that we could get the same results if the study were to be done again (Esaiasson et al. 2017). Reliability in a qualitative study is a matter of being thorough, careful and honest. I will throughout the study try to describe my approach clearly in order to increase the possibility of doing the same study again. During my operationalization, I will create a detailed and well formulated interview guide so that there will be no ambiguities and the interviewees will feel sure of their answers. And I will further take notice to the practical aspects of the process of interviewing, including wording of interview questions and considering of power relationship between me and my interviewee.

The internal validity of qualitative research refers to the question; to what extent will this study's findings be applicable to other situations? (Esaiasson et al. 2017). In this regard I have tried to make sure that the setting and context of the study is detailed in its description, so that future readers or researchers can asses the applicability of my study to their situation. The external validity and credibility of a study refers to the the confidence that data and its analysis are reliable and valid. The credibility of my findings are ensured by my usage of earlier research's methods including the NORAD (2013) framework as well as research theories on constraints and motives to ownership in aid. Furthermore I try to make a thick description of the terms ownership and participation, and the assurance of trustworthiness of data through spread and variation of interviewees. The variation includes the participant's time spent in the project, position in the project, and their nationality, all to secure a reduction of the influence of individual biases.

### Limitations

Not being able to draw conclusions based on level estimations and the costly side to qualitative research is two critiques to the method. Hence, this paper does not claim to have conducted all the information about examples of perceptions of participation and ownership there is. This paper had both limited budget and timeframe for interviews. The case of Bai Bang is furthermore a very large aid project with a vast timeframe, many sub-projects and more than a

few thousand people involved throughout the years. To mitigate this problem, I made sure to interview people from a number of different positions in the project. Through the method of interviewing actors with different expertise, I can hopefully cover all the important aspects and create a general picture of the perceptions of ownership and participation in the project.

Source criticism is crucial when conducting research through interviews (Esaiasson et al. 2017). Tendency and social desirability might appear in situations when I am interviewing Vietnamese workers and managers. Me as an interviewer might represent the “donor-side” and hence there is a likelihood of the Vietnamese workers under-sharing the challenges and hardships about participation and ownership. Vietnamese with a positive experience of the project, or with overall goodwill against swedes, will most likely be more willing to be interviewed.

Another source critical risk with my interviews is the evident problem of contemporaneity. The Swedish involvement ended in 1995, which proposes a risk of the interviewees not being able to remember correctly, or even the risk of the interviewee having a perfected and nostalgic picture of their time at the project.

To counteract these source critical problems, I have interviewed people with different professional backgrounds and nationalities, all likely to have different tendencies. Combining the material I gather from the interviewees with information about the project from Sida, counteracts the problem of contemporaneity, as the data from Sidas evaluation of the project was collected closer in time with the events of interest.

Vietnam is a country with limited freedom of speech. The Vietnamese would hence be more reluctant to sharing politically sensitive information or opinions. The subject of Bai Bang is not very politically sensitive but it was evident throughout the interviews that Vietnamese workers showed a less critical perspective on the project than the Swedish interviewees (more on this matter during the result chapter). There is also a risk of me not being able to get in contact with the most critical actors of the project, since they would most likely not want to part take in an interview. These problems were once again mitigated with the fact that interviews were held with both Swedes and Vietnamese.

The communicative difficulties when interviewing Vietnamese workers could present a methodological problem as it may have harmed the conversation and overall information

sharing. All of the Vietnamese workers were however well articulated in English and all of the interviewees were presented with the opportunity to have interpreters present for the interviews. I ultimately made sure to take the precautions possible and available to me at the time.

### Ethical considerations

Protection of human subjects through appropriate ethical principles is particularly important in qualitative studies due to the in depth nature of the research process. These important ethical considerations include *voluntary participation* and *informed consent*, as well as offered *anonymity* and *confidentiality* (Arifin 2018).

Voluntary participation and informed consent (Arifin 2018) was achieved by me explaining to the interviewee what they were about to participate in by telling them about the study and the role their provided data would have. Every new interaction was handled with consideration and all the interviewees were asked for consent at the very first stage. Together with a statement explaining that the participant may withdraw at any time or have their data removed if requested. I achieved the anonymity and confidentiality considerations (Arifin 2018) by informing the interviewees that anonymity was always available if requested. The transcribed interviews are kept behind password, and me and my research partner are the only ones to have access to the data. This, and the fact that the interviews were conducted in private settings, made sure that the confidentiality and anonymity considerations were achieved during the conducting of my study.

Ethical considerations are furthermore essential when the researcher is moving in a setting with different linguistic and cultural circumstances than their own (Arifin 2018). The cultural differences and barriers were handled by me educating myself on Vietnamese culture to make sure that I did not behave in any way disrespectful. For example, when addressing my Vietnamese interviewees, I made sure to add “Mr” or “Mrs” in front of their names, as this is standard courtesy in Vietnam. As there is a risk of miscommunication when not communicating on your first language, I made sure to be very meticulous when informing the Vietnamese of the premises of the situation, ensuring their possibilities to voluntarily participate.

Me as a researcher and how I am perceived, is another ethical consideration to have in mind when conducting a qualitative interview study. The different political situations of Sweden and

Vietnam might have affected the way Vietnamese perceive me. To combat the positionality, I assured that the Vietnamese had information about their option of anonymity, and secondly I made sure to not include questions of politically sensitive nature.

## Results and analysis

The purpose of this essay is to develop a better understanding of actors perceptions of efforts to create ownership and participation in aid projects. This has been achieved by qualitative interviews with workers and managers from the aid project of Bai Bang. The results from these interviews are presented under result-headlines that thematically developed with reference to the initial research questions and the most interesting results from the interviews. Under each headline I will present the empirical results and link them to the theories and earlier research.

### The relevant categories of the framework

The first question I wanted to answer in order to fulfill the purpose of the essay was, *how did the working methods linked to participation and ownership manifest themselves in Bai Bang?* The most interesting result that appeared from the interviews was that the categories of forms of participation (with shared process to set plans, rigid knowledge sharing, and shared oversight and monitoring) (NORAD 2013), are in fact relevant. It was a bit hard to get the interviewees to talk about each form of participation more exact. But all of the interviewed actors describe a process where shared influence in all parts of the project was solved with counterparts from both nationalities working together.

“The word counterpart implies that you are equals. The manager had counterpart with manager and the worker had counterpart with worker.”

- V3, Interpreter

Former research declares that to realize participation and ownership, one needs to identify all different actors in aid, and: share information, listen to views, involve actors in development planning and decision making (Rabinowitz 2015). My cumulated data shows that the most evident working method shaped by the idea of shared responsibility and empowerment during the project is the fact that Bai Bang was built in a way where counterparts from the two nations, in all of the sections and levels of the project, worked parallel to each other. I interpret it as, in

line with research, the actors in Bai Bang assessed it as effective to involve Vietnamese actors in the processes at the mill.

The interviewees talk about how each level at the project had teams where counterparts from Sweden and Vietnam worked together in all of the phases of the project to ensure compliance. Here shown by interview persons V3 and S5:

“We worked together when planning work, we called them counterparts at the same level. The high people work together and the low people work together. They had simple workers too you know, the Swedish people.”

– V3, Interpreter

“After all, we worked together and had to be there all the time, to work with the Vietnamese foremen but also planning daily work at the mill-camp with workers... We had constant meetings at the sight with the counterparts, where we went through what was to be done together with the Vietnamese, always planning and evaluating.”

– S5, Sub-Project Manager

Interview person S3 talks about how the Swedes realized they were performing in a Vietnamese context, and tells us about the importance for the donor side to realize that the recipient had the ultimate responsibility. This connects to former research on ownership and participation. The Norwegian Agency for Development (2013), proclaims it is important to acknowledge the recipients needs, and to cooperate through all phases of the projects. My interviewees present a picture where the donor side very much realized they operated in a Vietnamese context.

“We worked in the Vietnamese system, so to speak, we were not some parallel organization... We were so to speak, subordinate to the Vietnamese. If they made a decision we could not do much about it... We worked from the idea that they had the ultimate responsibility and we gave the best advise we could.”

- S3, Interpreter & Program Coordinator

The framework from NORAD also presents the important category of participation where it is key to work with the form of ownership where you transfer knowledge and undertake rigid



information sharing to the recipient of aid (2013). This also proved to be a relevant category as all of the actors I interviewed presents arguments of this being the main undertaking of the project at Bai Bang. This is shown by interview person S3:

“ I would say transfer of knowledge was the mantra, absolutely. That was the main task.”

- S3, Interpreter and Program Coordinator

Interview person S4 fills in with information about the school that was brought up in order to educate and form people in to having a successful drift of a paper-mill. This school was part of the project and just like research proclaims (De Reznio 2008, Rabinowitz 2015), the actors put forth that this school and the information and education that came with it, was absolutely vital for the success of the project.

“The project was very much an educational project, and they had a big school there that trained both electricians, paper making, also financial management and that sort of thing.”

- S4, Chief Advisor

The interviewees describe the knowledge transfer as not only instructing about mechanics and such but also transfer of knowledge about how one works in and manages a big project. Hence not only technical information sharing, but also sharing of knowledge about responsibility and management.

Here shown by interview person V1 who tells a descriptive story about how the project brought forth the importance of responsibility when working amongst other people and the art of coexisting:

“The workers from Bai Bang learned a lot. Skills on how to use modern machinery. I also learned a lot. I have an example: In the house area they had a common use water tap. Very simple. So this man, or his wife, opened this [the water tap] and it had no water. And then forgot he turned it on and went home. And this neighbor opened his door later. And he saw the water pouring out. So question to this man was; should you close it or not? If you let it be, it is not your fault. It is very simple like that. I say it to my kids.

Responsibility. This is the knowledge transfer, not only technology but everything around.”

- V1, Sub-Project Manager

Interview person S4 describes in the quote below their encounters with former workers from Bai Bang, when later in life traveling in Vietnam. S4 fills in the story about how the transfer of knowledge extended from technical knowledge, to knowledge about management and ways of execution. This following citation describes and fills in information about how the transfer of knowledge presents itself. The former and the following quote adds information to research’s explanations about what transfer of knowledge really is. Research describes the importance of information sharing (Kanji and Greenwood 2001, Rabinowitz 2015) and my interviewees illustrates the importance of both technical knowledge and something more difficult to measure, transfer of knowledge about corporate culture and the knowledge about responsibility and the handling of a company. Here described by interview person S4:

“When I then went around Vietnam later in life... We found executives who were earlier trained in Bai Bang. So it's a big transfer of knowledge. Now Vietnam stands as big in paper mills and production, but more difficult to measure is the fact that if you go out and examine the businesses remaining around Hanoi, you will see DNA remains from Bai Bang in most cases. Transfer of knowledge in both paper-information AND knowledge of the entire management.”

- S4, Chief Advisor

To summarize this section and answer the first research question, the interviewed actors describe a process at Bai Bang where shared influence in all parts of the project was solved with counterparts from both nationalities working together. Co-decisiveness occurred during planning, implementation and monitoring of work, and there was also a very present idea of education and transfer of knowledge, both technical and managerial.

## The cost of ownership and participation in Bai Bang

The second question this essay asks in order to fulfill the purpose is *what constraints did the actors and implementors from Bai Bang face with working methods shaped by ownership and participation?*

In contrast to ownership and participation, authoritarian rule can be quite effective if you want to enforce change (De Valk 2014). Codetermination might have value in itself from a Swedish perspective, but in the vast majority of the world, this may not be obvious or even rather controversial. Programs of ownership and participation are relatively cumbersome and they come with a cost. The answers from the actors from Bai Bang shows that co-determination is a complex process that takes both time and resources, and ultimately comes with constraints. I will now use the experienced constraints of my interviewees to describe why not everyone will say ownership and participation is wonderful and great.

One of the key constraints to further ownership and participation is the donors focus on compliance and their tendency for risk-averse culture (Wood et al 2011). This constraint was evidently present for the actors at the project of Bai Bang. The risk averse culture and the Swedes reluctance to share their control over the project affected the project in a way where Swedes had a hard time letting go. This constraint turned out to be the reason why Bai Bang started a “phasing out strategy” where interview person S4 was functioning as chief advisor:

”The execution strategy for phase out, the plan, was based on getting the swedes to transfer their responsibility to the Vietnamese. But there was a tendency for the Swedes to hold on. When there was an accident in the factory, instead of teaching the Vietnamese, the Swedes went right in and fixed things.”

– S4, Chief Advisor

This constraint named by interview person S4, mattered for the process of aid as it slowed down the operation of the Swedes leaving all the responsibility to the Vietnamese side. This quote from interview person V2 further describes the risk averse tendency with the Swedes:

“When I worked with Swedish counterparts here, they told me they were afraid of if they go home Bai Bang could not run, we could not run the factory

by ourselves. But when they stopped working here, we ran it smoothly and production was going up.”

– V2, Paper Engineer & Principal of Vocational School

In line with what research presents about problems with ownership, co-determination in the project of Bai Bang sometimes could stand in contrast to efficient rule, cost-efficiency and efficient change (De Valk 2004). Interview person S1 was employed at the very beginning of the project when building of the mill and paper machines were on the agenda. S1 describes their attitude to co-determination in this stage of the project like the following quote.

“We had a production that was already delayed, so we had to work very hard. So there was little thought of co-determination or anything like that in my position. The Vietnamese who worked with us were there as handymen, or simply apprentices”

– S1, Sub-Project Manager and painter

Another constraint to ownership and participation that research brings forward is the problem of the donor not having enough knowledge about the context they are, or are about to, operate in. If the donor do not have knowledge about the social, cultural or political context, it could potentially threat their ability to help with change and the success of transferring the project to the recipient country (Mansuri and Rao 2013). My interviewees has two examples of how bad knowledge of context undermined the work with ownership in the project of Bai Bang. The first one that was brought forward by the actors was the Vietnamese suspicion of western countries, and the unfamiliarity of western cultures in Vietnam. Here shown by interview person S5.

“In those early days the Vietnamese were quite secretive. We were Westerners. We were not East Germans or Soviets”

- S5, Sub-Project Manager

This constraint is brought forward in research as an important threat to succeeding with participation and ownership research. My essay adds and describes how the constraint may behave and manifest itself from the viewpoint of actors in an aid project. Interview person S3 fills in with information about how the suspicion of the west made it hard to cooperate in some cases:

“Some Vietnamese also thought it was a bit strange, I encountered Vietnamese who said "You are capitalist, why do you support us?". In the worst case, they could conclude that "You are spies." They were used to Russians and Chinese, all of old Eastern Europe. This posed a threat to cooperation, definitely.”

- S3, Interpreter and Program Coordinator

The second constraint, in the form of bad knowledge of context, was the fact that the donors did not seem to be prepared for the fact that Vietnam was in an impaired post-war state with many poor citizens. My interviewees describe that Sida had to stop and rethink how their resources were to be placed. Interview person S5 for example, describes how they at the beginning of the project had to first and foremost make sure that the Vietnamese workers had enough energy to work, before they could even start with anything like ownership reforms and ways of implementation.

“I mean we saw in what bad condition they were, especially at the beginning. And then we tried to help them as much as we could, but we couldn't do everything. When it was at its worst, Sida decided that we should start giving them some food. Then, back in -79, they ate rats and logs.”

- S5, Sub-Project Manager

Research also presents power inequality within the recipient community as one of the constraints to ownership and participation. In line with what studies say, this presented problems for the donor side in Bai Bang with pursuing aid goals, at the same time as tackling inequality and systems of exclusion with the recipient (Rabinowitz 2015). This constraint presented itself as gender inequality within the Bai Bang project, interview person S3 describes how men and women worked under quite different circumstances. In a discussion about how the heavy machines and tools tended to be exclusively handled by the men in the project, interview person S3 said the following quote about gender inequality in the project.

“But they (the women) worked and continue to work under the glass ceiling, they are not allowed to be better or smarter than their male colleagues. They are both structurally and psychologically subordinate. Although there are

tough women in all walks of society, they are still in many ways subordinate to the men and it was like that at Bai Bang as well.”

- S3, Interpreter and Program Coordinator

Interview person S3 continues with stories from their experience in the forestry area of the project, and describes another constraint in the form of power inequalities within the recipient country. S3 describes how the project had a hard time interfering with the ethnical power structures at location. In my opinion, this poses a threat to pursuing ownership in the project as the function of improving the quality of life for the poor (Mansuri and Rao 2013), when excluding the minority groups that originated from the area of the forestry. This ethnical power-imbalance made the minorities around the forestry untouched by the improvements made for people around the mill and therefore they were not helped by the aid. This can in my opinion be seen as a failure of implementation of ownership within the project, in this particular case.

“And one problem for equality you should not forget about is this forest area where they recruited King-people (ethnic group), ethnically speaking. In the forest area, those who lived there traditionally back in time were minorities, lots of different ethnic groups. They were the ones who lived there from the beginning and farmed the land. Then King came and invaded their area, and the typical thing then was that the King-people, who were employed in all of the forest companies, looked down on the ethnic groups. It was considered that they were not as educated and could not operate machines and so on. The many ethnical groups from the forest area were excluded, one might say, from the project.”

- S3, Interpreter and Program Coordinator

## Motives to ownership and participation in Bai Bang

The third question this essay aims to answer is *what are perceived as the basic motives for implementing participation and ownership reforms in Bai Bang?*

Pretty (1995) proclaims that there is a typical purist approach to ownership and participation which views co-determination and empowerment of the recipient as fundamental rights and goals in themselves. Contrary to the research's weight on this motive, the instrumentalist approach to ownership and participation is the most evident among the interviewees. This is quite a big question, as it relates why we even have influence and democracy in aid processes and related projects. If it should be the case that shared influence over the process does not help the process succeed, you might as well skip it?

As already stated, the interviewees made no clear declarations proving or advocating for ownership and participation as "rights and value in themselves", but instead their attitude was professional pride and the realization that the methods of ownership help and improve the sustainability and effectiveness of the project.

On one hand, the "value in it self"- approach to ownership and participation is perhaps a given and here I would like to be a bit critical to the interviewees reluctance to talk about ownership in these terms. It might be that this approach to ownership is so evident that they don't bring it up. On the other hand, as interview person S3 brings up, many of the Swedes did not have clear motives of solidarity or ownership as value in itself, but did instead only care about their work morale and the success at location.

"I absolutely want to downplay the solidarity aspect of the project... There was on the other hand an enormous professional pride and will to succeed on the part of the Swedes... The Swedes realized that it was not possible to work against the Vietnamese if they had a strong idea about something, then the Swedes tried to coordinate".

– S3, Interpreter and Program Coordinator

In my opinion, this speaks for the actor's focus on what ownership can do for the success and efficiency of aid, the instrumentalist approach to ownership and participation. Interview person S5 fills in:

“So yes, regardless of fancy policies of recipient orientation, on the ground or on the floor, you are pragmatic and you see what works and what doesn't work, so to speak. And involving the Vietnamese worked.”

- S4, Chief Advisor

To summarize this section about motives, I think it is important in itself that the interviewees only talked about ownership and participation in instrumentalist terms, as this brings up the question; without the instrumentalist value, would it be harder to justify the purist view of working methods shaped by ownership and participation as valuable in themselves, if they do not help the success or efficiency of the project?

### The difference between the interviewees

Another thing that is very noticeable from the interviews, which I think is both expected and therefore important to bring up, is that the Swedish interviewees put a lot of pressure on the hardships of ownership and participation, while the Vietnamese interviewees tend to exclusively talk about the great things of the project. When asked about hardships with the implementation at the project the Vietnamese tend to only express the good things about the project instead, here illustrated by V3 when asked about encountered problems with the cooperation:

“It was a very very good relationship and cooperation. Between us, Bai Bang people, and the swedes”

- V3, Interpreter

All of the constraints presented in the result-section “The cost of ownership and participation”, were expressed by the Swedes. Here illustrated by a quote by interview person S5:

“Where the swedes lived, we nailed up a plank at the camp office, and wrote “Here, you can bang your head”, because people did have a difficult time at the project sometimes.”

- S5, Sub-Project Manager

I think this is the result of a few different things, partly because of the fact that Vietnam received millions in aid from Sweden and therefore the Vietnamese have a good reason to be thankful and less critical, and partly because of the structure in Vietnam where you may risk something



as a private person when criticizing a big corporation. I am well aware that this may pose a threat to the methodology of this essay.

Furthermore I think that the formulation of criticism may differ from different countries and cultures. This means that the Swedes formulate hardships and criticism in a way that I as an interviewer am used to, while the Vietnamese interviewees may formulate their criticism in a way that I am not used to or in a way that I am not able to catch to the same extent. Even though I received mostly the same information from my interviewees, it was evident that the Vietnamese were more reluctant to speak about the problems of the project in an explicit way. In my opinion, this is a sign that it was extremely useful for the quality of the essay to be able to interview both Swedish and Vietnamese workers.

## Conclusions and future research

The main purpose of this essay was to develop a better understanding of actors perceptions of efforts to create ownership and participation in aid projects. This purpose took form and grew from the fact that earlier studies argued for the heavy weight of participation and ownership for the success of aid (Rabinowitz 2015), the lack of descriptions of what the constraints consist of and the fact that research has had more of a normative approach to ownership and participation research. The idea for the essay also took form from Gideon Rabinowitz (2015) showing that the field lacks in studies investigating the implementors and actors's views on ownership and participation in aid, therefore I aim to provide this.

Answering the first question of issue, *How did the working methods linked to participation and ownership manifest themselves in Bai Bang?*, I find the example of counterparts from the two nations working together as the most evident answer for how working methods shaped by ownership and participation, manifested themselves at Bai Bang. My interview guide and analysis framework used the NORAD framework (2013) for investigating ownership in Bai Bang. This framework showed to be relevant to the actors of Bai Bang as they gave answers correlating to NORAD's weight on cooperation and manifestation of ownership in *planning, implementation* and *evaluation*. The interviewees major focus on recipient orientation and the counterpart-method demonstrate how all levels of the project had a focus on codetermination and recipient ownership.

Even though my interviewees initially present a picture where the functions of ownership and participation were both necessary for the project and made it successful, there are evidently many constraints to implementing these reforms. My data shows that co-determination is a complex process that takes both time and resources, and ultimately comes with many restraints.

These restraints brings us to the second question of issue, *What constraints did the actors and implementors from Bai Bang face with working methods shaped by ownership and participation?*. Earlier research has described a line of different types of constraints; *risk-averse culture, inherent tensions in aid relationships, power inequality within the recipient community and knowledge of context and flexibility issues* (Wood et al 2011, de Valk 2004, Rabinowitz 2015, Mansuri & Rao 2013, The Listening Project 2011). Through my operationalization and interview guide I have shown how these constraints behave in reality, and the interviewees has given the constraints life through explaining how they played out in the aid project of Bai Bang.

The last question of issue is *What are perceived as the basic motives for implementing participation and ownership reforms in Bai Bang?* The accumulated data proves that none of the former workers from Bai Bang view the ownership reforms and receiver orientation as fundamental rights or goals in themselves (Pretty 1995). Instead, the interviewees present arguments of pragmatism where they simply describe the ownership reforms as important for the sustainability and efficiency for the aid project. With this information, a question for further exploration arose; Without the instrumentalist value, would it be harder to justify the purist view of working methods shaped by ownership and participation as valuable in themselves, if they do not help the success of the project?

This paper has contributed with a deeper understanding of ownership and participation in aid, through the lens of the implementers in a big aid program. I have said something about how actors in aid projects experience the process that leads up to completed ownership.

The problem is not “yes or no” to pursuing ownership and participation reforms in aid, the problem is the road that leads to ownership. There are many hardships about it and furthermore questions about what the motives to ownership are, and this study is a description of, and therefore a contribution to understanding the complexities of ownership and participation during aid projects.

This study has explored how workers of an aid project has perceived ownership and participation reforms. Ownership and participation reforms has proven to be efficient for the sustainability during the partnership of aid-donor and aid-receiver. I think future research would benefit from investigating aid projects once the donor has ended their involvement and stopped the funds. How are ownership and participation reforms affecting the project once the donor is no longer in the picture? Is the focus on ownership and codetermination during aid relationships, something that affects the chain of command and ways of management positively, even when the project stands on its own?

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## Appendix

### Interview guide

#### Bakgrundsfrågor:

Under vilken period arbetade du med Bai Bang?  
Vilken position hade du på Bai Bang? Vilka var dina huvudsakliga uppgifter?  
Hur mycket arbetade du direkt med vietnameser/svenskar?

#### Uppsats:

Min uppsats vill undersöka hur man jobbar med ägandeskap, deltagande och stärkande av mottagaren av bistånd. Jag utgår från tanken om att detta är viktiga aspekter i ett biståndsprojekt, och Bai Bang är ett intressant case då det är initierat med en tanke om solidaritet, och när jag läser Sidas utvärdering är av projektet så är det tydligt att man utgick från en sorts receiver orientation.

Jag kommer ställa lite frågor om hur man jobbat med med olika delar som forskning anser vara viktiga för att stimulera ägandeskap i lyckade biståndsprojekt.

#### Inledande frågor:

På tal om denna uttalade idé om recipient orientation, kan du berätta lite om hur man jobbade med dessa idéer i projektet?  
Hur såg det ut på den position du befann dig i projektet?

#### Planning and policymaking

Hur jobbade man med recipient orientation i processer av planering?  
Vad fanns det för försvårande faktorer med att planera över nationaliteterna, under biståndsprojektet?  
Anser du att inclusivity i planeringsprocessen var en viktig del av projektet?  
Vad anser du va motiven till de arbetsätt du beskrivit?

#### Information sharing during implementation

Hur jobbade man vid din position med information sharing?  
Vad fanns det för försvårande faktorer med arbetet med information sharing och upplärning?  
Anser du att informationsdelning och upplärning var en viktig del av projektet? Hur och varför?  
Vad anser du va motiven till de arbetsätt du beskrivit?

#### Monitoring and evaluation

Hur jobbade man med recipient orientation under övervakandet och utvärderingen av arbetet?  
Vad var svårigheterna med monitoring och evaluation?  
Anser du att möjlighet för kooperativ utvärdering och klagomål var en viktig del av projektet?  
Vad anser du va motiven till de arbetsätt du beskrivit?

#### Closing Questions

På vilka andra sätt tog sig denna solidaritets och recipient orientation- idé i projektet sig i uttryck?  
Var det något arbetsätt som tydligt stärkte vietnameserna som vi inte talat om här?  
Kan det vara så att solidaritetstanken i projektet tog sig i annat uttryck än de processer som vi talat om här?

