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Summary

People in professional settings are increasingly turning their focus outward to access sources of knowledge and expertise that can help them respond more effectively to complex challenges. This focus toward dispersed sources of knowledge is further stimulated as ICT-enabled forms of communication have become more readily available. The sector of development cooperation exemplifies this tendency. Development cooperation depends on the resources and expertise of heterogeneous stakeholders, including NGOs, donors, policy-makers and local beneficiaries, to realize its objectives. However, with a broad range of stakeholders comes a broad range of perspectives on what deserves priority.

This research shows how development professionals accommodate heterogeneous perspectives, while simultaneously collaborating toward shared goals. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it comprises three qualitative empirical studies of knowledge exchange at organization, network, and individual levels of development practice, and addresses the overall research question: 'How does knowledge management for development contribute to participatory objectives, given the heterogeneous perspectives on aid?' So doing, the research sheds light on the way in which people manage their knowledge needs, both formally and informally, and how this strengthens or inhibits participatory development, aimed at making development decision-making more inclusive. The research contributes to development studies, by generating a development-specific perspective on knowledge management. It also contributes to organization studies, by explaining how heterogeneous perspectives are not necessarily overcome, but accommodated in dispersed, multi-stakeholder collaborations.