

## **Abstract**

On the backdrop of the expansion and professionalisation of international development NGOs in recent decades, this thesis explores how these organisations conceptualize, carry out, and ultimately struggle to measure the long-term impact of their work. Drawing on practice theory and critical debates about NGO-ization, the Washington Consensus, and the New Public Management, it uncovers a fundamental mismatch between donor-driven evaluation requirements and the ambitious definitions of “impact” outlined by the widely used OECD DAC criteria. It finds that although NGOs routinely conduct various monitoring and evaluation activities, only a tiny fraction of projects undergo rigorous *ex post* impact assessments. Resource constraints, short-term project cycles, and managerial preference for actionable insights deter more comprehensive studies. Through interviews and organizational case analyses, the study shows that NGOs largely assume impact without measuring it systematically, raising questions about who should be responsible for robust impact measurement. Ultimately, these findings highlight persistent tensions among donor expectations, operational constraints, and the pursuit of meaningful, sustainable development outcomes.