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**RESEARCH PROGRESS REPORT
(June 2017)**

***Development, diplomacy, and expertise:
Placing state bureaucratic labour in the CIDA-DFAIT merger***

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This interim report summarizes findings from the first year in which the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) provided funding for this research, from April 2016 through June 2017. This project's main objective is to better understand the processes and impacts of the amalgamation, ongoing since 2013, of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). The central question is how the merger of development, foreign, and trade policy institutions has altered the labour of professional officer-level experts and the role of policy expertise in the new department, first called the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, and renamed Global Affairs Canada in 2015. A few primary themes emerged from the first year of this research and a pilot project carried out in 2015-16, the most important being perceptions of and shifts in institutional culture, the classification of departmental positions and staff expertise, and organizational restructuring and relations within the department, including reporting mechanisms, human resources management, and the physical spaces of GAC work. Recent scholarship on state institutions demonstrates the importance of looking more closely at the day-to-day work environments and strategic agency of professional expert labour in bureaucratic settings to understand how policy is made and executed, and to rethink longstanding questions about the relationship between agency and structure. Reorganizing both the quotidian patterns of bureaucrats' work and the institutional configuration in which this work is carried out shapes the new department's structure and operation, how GAC works with partner organizations in Canada and internationally, and how it fulfills its development, diplomatic, and trade policy mandates.

In the first year of research, the primary investigator and three research assistants have pursued three distinct aspects of the project: first, the comparative international context in which the CIDA-DFAIT merger occurred, looking at a range of other OECD states that have undertaken similar mergers; second, institutional culture and collective bargaining in Canada's foreign policy apparatus, especially the role of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) representing this class of officers in GAC and predecessor departments; and finally, the role of gender and other forms of social difference in GAC and the work of development, trade, and foreign service officers. The latter two of these remain in progress, while the first is nearing completion and has already produced a conference presentation in May 2017. The research has proceeded through the collection of several different forms of data:

- interviews with 36 individuals drawn from the development, trade, and political streams, as well as consular officers, including 18 individuals working in a Canadian embassy in a Latin American country where Canada has significant foreign, trade, and development policy interests and resources;
- primary data produced by the Canadian federal government, including regular reports as well as transition books produced for ministers and the 2015 change of government;
- reports and secondary literature on mergers and amalgamations in relevant comparator states, including Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, and Norway;

- and primary and secondary literature on Canadian development and aid policy and diplomatic history, including personal memoirs and biographies of Canadian foreign service officers, and newsletters and other materials produced by PAFSO.

Preliminary findings of this research project can be summarized as follows:

- While much of the current academic literature on the state, and especially on official development assistance agencies, focuses on state institutions' structural forms, the policy formation process, or the efficacy or impact of specific policies, this research draws on an emerging body of critical work in political science, development studies, and political geography to assert the importance of the state's institutional materiality and position as a workplace in a larger division of labor. Global trends in development assistance policies and practices and the restructuring of ODA agencies, especially in relation to diplomatic and trade institutions, provides a useful entry point for further developing a spatial understanding of the contemporary state. Organizational restructuring and aid agency reforms, particularly in building, managing, and strengthening links between ODA agencies and ministries and departments responsible for international trade and foreign policy and diplomacy, are especially important because of connections donor states and critics have made between aid effectiveness, trade liberalization, and foreign policy initiatives, including both multilateral and bilateral arrangements and agreements. The CIDA-DFAIT amalgamation presents a strong example of a state reworking these connections, and of the difficulties of merging institutions with related but differing mandates, personnel, and work patterns and practices.
- Examining the international context, there is no clear set of best practices or ideal model for how to configure the relationship between development, foreign, and trade policy institutions, personnel, or mandates, or how to contend with resulting changes to institutional cultures and bureaucratic labor practices, especially in terms of melding different forms of expertise present in the merged department. While such mergers and amalgamations are common, drivers and obstacles are context-specific and dependent on political conditions, leadership, and projects in each state. Across the other examples examined (Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, and Norway), key challenges in amalgamating development, foreign, and trade institutions include: making differing mandates and budget priorities cohere; reorganizing reporting and political responsibilities, from the ministerial level down; identification, organization, and retention of knowledge and expertise in rotational systems; and morale and cultural change, especially but not only for development officers.
- Interviews and internal reports indicate that many issues emerging from amalgamation persist several years after the initial decision was made and the merger begun. This builds on a pilot study conducted in 2015-16, and published in *The Canadian Geographer* (Essex and

Carmichael, 2017, vol. 61, no. 2; <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cag.12328/full>), focusing primarily on former CIDA staff brought into the new department. Some participants interviewed in that study were interviewed again in the first year of this expanded research. Common points of emphasis in interview data collected in the past year include lingering concerns over mobility for xCIDA personnel in Ottawa headquarters and limits on the availability of rotational positions for those outside the FS category; an institutional culture that many xCIDA personnel feel undervalues development experts and expertise; the limited availability of and support for specialists in the merged department, and a more general reworking of the generalist/specialist divide; a work environment in which effective bilingualism cannot always be counted on; a lack of direction on development and aid policy given the lengthy process associated with the International Assistance Review (though this process recently came to a close with the announcement of a new development and aid policy in early June 2017); and a generalized sense that the department struggles with the identification, organization, and promotion of competencies and skills among its professional officer ranks. Issues related to changes to workspaces, particularly with the movement of offices, people, and materials between 200 Promenade du Portage and the Lester Pearson Building at 125 Sussex Avenue in Ottawa, seem to have been largely worked out since the pilot study, though the full benefits of physical co-location in the merged department, particularly in the geographic bureaus, will likely take more time to become apparent. Management levels have been fully amalgamated and de-streamed, however, and a 2015 internal report commissioned by senior management suggests that at this level, the amalgamation has been largely successful, though cultural change and personnel turnover mean a longer and more difficult period of adjustment for rank-and-file personnel. Many interview participants noted that more could be done to help officer-level staff adjust to amalgamation and fully merge the mandates, personnel, and resources of CIDA and DFAIT. Many also felt, however, that proactive measures to assist this process were unlikely to occur, even with the 2015 change in government, and that more far-reaching cultural change would only come through more long-term personnel turnover.

- The visit to a Canadian embassy in Latin America yielded important insight into how amalgamation has proceeded in the field as opposed to headquarters, and what remains to be addressed in providing coherence to the department's mandate and the three streams or pillars of political, development, and trade personnel that comprise its core. Amalgamation has progressed differently and perhaps more completely and effectively in the embassy setting than in headquarters, due in large part to the nature of work in foreign posts requiring interaction and coordination between DFAIT and CIDA. The decentralized nature of reporting in some bilateral development programs has created confusion and tensions over the flow of information between Ottawa and the field, and over responsibilities for development programming and reporting. This needs to be explored further, especially as it relates to similar processes in other geographic branches in GAC, especially Africa.

- Many participants in the embassy also noted that two key challenges confront them in their work following amalgamation. First is the issue of differing timelines driving work in the development stream and in the trade and political streams, the former working on longer timelines and generally more cautiously, the other with much shorter deadlines and with more urgency. The more stringent accountability controls on development accounts can compound this issue in an environment of relative budget scarcity, though most participants acknowledged that these mechanisms are important for maintaining the independence of development funding from politicization and appropriate accountability in development programming. The second issue is a relative lack of knowledge about the other streams' work, in terms of both the broader mandate and the specific day-to-day work undertaken, an issue most pronounced between the development stream and the trade and political streams. These latter two have worked together much more closely and regularly for a longer period, and so are more familiar with the nature of the other section's work. Amalgamation and the push to work more closely with the development stream than in the past when CIDA was autonomous, but without more robust knowledge and understanding of each stream's mandate and work, has resulted in missed opportunities to find synergies, and limits on the flow of information between the three streams. Some participants suggested short-term placements of officers in other sections in the embassy could help ease this knowledge gap and produce more coherent and cohesive programs and execution of the department's mandates, though this is complicated by internal departmental rules, position classifications, and labor-management relations.
- More work remains to be done in year two of the research on both the institutional history of PAFSO and collective bargaining in DFAIT and its predecessors, and the question of social difference (especially gender, bilingualism, and visible minority status) in relation to expertise, labor, and policy in GAC. Following the embassy visit in Latin America, the PI is also developing an additional focus on institutional, political, and geographic relationships between field sites such as embassies and consulates and GAC's Ottawa headquarters, and the impacts of amalgamation on the larger network of spaces where departmental personnel work. Going forward, this will require more attention to the differences between field and HQ spaces and the nature of officers' work in the department across the development, political, and trade streams.