

The Paternalistic Assumptions in the Narrative of International Aid: An Historical Overview

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Abstract

This paper intends to provide an enriched understanding of the paternalistic assumptions in the narrative of international aid. The starting point for the analysis is to define the concept of Paternalism, looking at the distinction between rigid and weak condescendence. The paper then discusses the elements of hard Paternalism in how traditional development aid works. As will be discussed in detail, the most prevalent recurring elements of hard Paternalism are the representation of aid-receivers and aid-providers in aid agencies campaigns. The presence of top-down initiatives with little participation of aid-receivers, as exemplified by the conditionality of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and standardised funding procedures that negate both accountability and a genuine relationship of equality between international aid-providers and aid-receivers. Starting from these hypotheses, the authors will demonstrate that international aid's paternalistic system is problematic from a deontological and consequentialist perspective through a qualitative approach to the existing literature. As a result, the paper will present innovative solutions to respond to the poor's plight more effectively, accountable, and sustainable.

Keywords: Paternalism, international aid, social history, development, welfare.

1. Introduction

Today, almost 3 billion people worldwide try to subsist on less than \$2 a day (Easterly, 2007). Some 1.2 billion people live even on less than \$1 a day (adjusted for purchasing power). More than 2 billion lack access to basic sanitation, and 840 million do not have enough to eat, with 163 million children being severely malnourished. Easily preventable diseases and starvation are killing 10 million children under the age of five each year. In the face of such statistics, it is hardly unreasonable to feel a keen sense of despair and an urgent need to find solutions to the global poor's tragedy (Saunders, 2018). A great many people do, and the idea that many people in relatively wealthy countries moved by the plight of the poor, even those in distant lands, to alleviate poverty makes the world a better place than it would be absent this commitment (Anderson et al., 2012). As documented by the relevant literature on development, however, the international assistance system is deeply flawed. Many authors identify the underlying reason for adopting a paternalistic approach to international aid, which tends to underestimate the ability of autonomous, informed and competent individuals in aid-receiving countries to do anything about their plight without outside help. According to a common and patronising understanding of the poor's plight, aid-receivers have less than full capacities to plan and act (Shapiro, 2019). They are, therefore, dependent on the "paternal" rule of aid-providers to achieve positive development. This view upholds the general superiority of aid-providers in light of a paternalistic idea that they understand the global poor's problems better than the poor do themselves. Consequently, aid providers are likely to impose a biased vision of what is supplied to developing countries without consulting with those on the receiving end of what they want and need.

The paternalistic assumptions that constitute the narrative of international assistance fail to consider that local

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people might understand their contexts more deeply than outsiders and be better able to develop and implement poverty reduction strategies.

The failure to engage with local people's ideas and options negates any genuine relationship-building between aid-providers and aid-receivers. Most people in low countries suggest, should be at the heart of the international aid system and make international aid efforts more accountable and effective (Winters, 2010). The paternalistic aid system falls short in these regards because aid-receivers, often depicted as powerless or ignorant regarding their problems and opportunities for action, have little space to provide feedback about the overall impact of aid to improve future performance. International aid found wanting in both deontological and consequentialist perspectives. The former views paternalistic aspects of international support are morally problematic. Paternalistically driven assistance suggests that the poor are powerless individuals incapable of taking responsibility to manage their own lives and pursue the changes they seek. It shows little respect and consideration for poor people's dignity and depicts them as passive beneficiaries of projects designed and managed by benevolent outsiders (Lotter, 2007). This paper wants to underline the fact that paternalistic aid has only a limited chance of success from a consequentialist perspective. They did not engage in developing and implementing aid projects; the poor were left with questions, suspicions, and disappointed expectations. They also resent that these projects are not shaped according to their capacities, value systems, and outlook on life. Consequently, little or no sense of ownership and responsibility for aid projects' future exists on the part of the poor. It engenders passivity and prolongs the poor's dependency on outside interventions to continue the aid programmes (Jennings, 2008). Starting from the supra mentioned hypotheses, through a qualitative approach to the existing literature, the paper demonstrates that international aid is an inadequate mechanism for responding to the global poor's tragedy and promoting long-lasting development and self-determination. According to Madeley's studies (1991), the purpose is to underline the fact that it is time for a new international paradigm that redefines the inefficient aid system to support the more effective, accountable and sustainable change.

2. Distinctive elements of hard Paternalism

Paternalistically driven assistance provided to developing countries by Western states has a long history. According to the social theory of evolution, which originated in the nineteenth Century and fundamentally influenced sociological and human thinking up until the First World War. Different societies reflect different eras or stages in the same evolutionary process, from simpler and primitive forms to modern, morally superior and more civilised organisations (Baaz, 2005).

Western civilisation presented as the universal terminus of evolution its alleged position at the top of the evolutionary ladder legitimised the so-called "White Man's Burden" to civilise "under-developed societies" according to Western standards, societies were to repeat, copy and internalise. "Under-developed societies" were conceptualised as blank slates without any meaningful history or institutions of their own. Upon which the West, through the wielding of its authority, could imprint its superior moral codes and ideals: its faith in scientific progress, technological innovation and the discovery of rational solutions to human problems, for instance (Easterly, 2007). In Africa's specific case, the White Man's Burden was a self-aggrandising belief in the inherently superior Western man's power to awaken the primitive African people from their passive and indolent disposition to bring light to the dark continent (Easterly, 2007). Africans were seen as inferior, viewed through a racially paternalistic lens that underestimated their ability to do anything about their plight without outside help. The West also portrayed the Africans as childlike: Baker (2015) describes how philosopher Georg Hegel referred to Africa as the "land of childhood". Albert Schweitzer wrote of Africans that the "*negro is a child*", and Europeans long used paternalistic considerations to justify colonialism and by Americans to justify slavery. It represents the image of an enlightened and rational Western man in contrast to a dependent and irrational. Others still operate in contemporary development aid discourses, where the poor, in Africa as well as elsewhere, remains in large part a child-type in need of the paternal rule of the West (Baaz, 2005).

Aid agencies marketing efforts to raise awareness and coax the public into donating contribute to reinforcing the stereotype of aid-receivers as needy people who have less than full capacity to plan and act, therefore dependent on others to reach positive development (Cohen, 2001). Such campaigns depict the poor as unable to make decisions and act responsibly to improve their circumstances, though, in reality, they are primarily autonomous, informed and competent. Poor victims are not blamed for their plight, but neither are they thought to be capable of bringing about improvements in their own lives. It is this underestimation of the agency of the poor. But according to this paper's aim, which can be saved only by the developed world's superior resources that come across as paternalistic?. Stanley Cohen (2001) condemns the use of pathetic images of starving children, helpless and dependent, as one of the most stereotyped examples of aid agencies campaigns. As Cohen argues, this communicates a negative, offensive and misleading view of the poor that fuels tremendous Paternalism. Even though awareness of the stereotype seems to have increased, there remain recurrent patterns in advertising development support.

The poor are still depicted as the object of pity (Clark, 2003). In particular, aid agencies portrayals stress, helplessness and victimisation when presenting needy children as the primary receivers of aid, although aid is

available for all ages. The implicit message is that the aid agency alone can rescue the children and improve their circumstances.

Given the standard portrayals of foreign poor in aid campaigns, troubling stereotypes reinforce the poor downplayed agency, and outside actors' roles are emphasised (Brainard and LaFleur, 2008). Furthermore, aid campaigns convey a perception of development as strongly associated with industrialisation, modernisation, where the Western model is perceived as the ultimate achievement. This view upholds Western countries general superiority, in contrast to the alleged backwardness of developing countries, as expressed by their morals, culture, and counterproductive practices (Baaz, 2005). The verdict of backwardness handed down to developing countries and the West's self-satisfied idea as the universal terminus of evolution leads Western countries to believe that the poor in developing countries can arise from their degraded situation only with the help of the West. As Maria Eriksson Baaz explains (2005), the stereotypes embedded in aid agencies campaigns favour a considerable power imbalance between aid-providers from the West and aid-receivers in developing countries. Far from promoting an egalitarian cultural exchange, aid-providers tend to advocate exact solutions on a wide range of issues, even in areas outside their professional knowledge, to help the alleged ignorant and powerless aid-receivers. The campaigns rarely portray aid-receivers as autonomous, informed, and competent agents with their priorities and understanding of their situation, aid receivers independent judgement on what is required to satisfy their interests and needs brought to the fore. As a modern version of the White Man's Burden, the campaigns efforts to raise private donations can see once again be patronising the poor. Also, their governments cannot fix the aid agency's problems, and only the aid agency can (Kipling, 1899).

3. Top-down initiatives with participation by aid-receivers

William Easterly (2007) argues that the modern idea of the "White Man's Burden" encourages a paternalistic approach to development assistance in which aid-providers design universal blueprints for promoting growth, which does not adequately reflect differences within and across the areas where aid is provided. In Easterly's view (2007), the international aid bureaucracy is mainly composed of Planners, namely, the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the regional development banks (e.g. the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations agencies), national government agencies such as the US Agency for International Development, and rich governments especially in North America and Western Europe. Classic Planner's mentality is to prescribe "big push, top-down" initiatives from the West to fix complex internal problems in the rest of the world (Radeny, 2011), in the light of a "one-size-fits-all solution" fails to take account of contextual differences. It seems that problems in different areas can be easily fixed in similar ways by Planners who deploy various interventions besides foreign aid, including technical advice and lending from the IMF and scientific interventions to cure disease. Planners claim to know enough to impose solutions and determine what to supply without considering that the poor may understand their problems better than they do (Baaz, 2005). Easterly (2007) shows how the market of lending to developing countries is flawed by a paternalistic mentality characterised by an extremely detailed and intrusive conditionality on loans, which tends to ignore the complexity of domestic political pressures. In times of financial crisis, developing countries governments might be desperate for immediate funds, and the IMF is often the only source for such a loan. Thanks to the money, governments can finance productive investments that they would otherwise be unable to fund, with the possibility of repaying the loan during good times (Jung et al., 2015). Yet, the conditions that the IMF places on loans to reinforce financial discipline and to ensure governments can repay might agitate domestic politics in an excessively intrusive way. According to Easterly, the IMF's confident top-down prescriptions about cuts to central bank credit and government deficits have some patronising echoes of the White Man's Burden. In this view, the IMF knows in detail what is best for developing countries and fully understands the entire complicated system of their financial equilibrium.

As a condition of its loans, it imposes the same type of comprehensive reforms, otherwise known as "structural adjustment" (Young et al., 2020), on all borrowing countries, even to fragile political systems, often forcing governments to increase taxes or cut subsidies for bread or cooking oil. The IMF financial programming model has proved unpopular, with people taking to the streets to protest against the IMF enforced austerity, as happened for example in 2000 in several Latin American and African countries, namely Ecuador, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia (Easterly, 2007). It was a sign of the impact of the IMF's ambitious economic reforms on domestic politics. An even more significant effect was felt in Liberia and Somalia, which collapsed in 1985 and 1989. They had both spent a considerable period under IMF "structural adjustment" programmes in the preceding ten years (Easterly, 2007). The IMF has failed to consider the socio-economic and political realities on the ground. Its "good intent" policies have had troubling effects in the contexts where they were applied, leading to governmental collapse and anarchy. Although its conditions have been revealed to be ineffective in enforcing financial discipline in developing countries, the IMF continues to get involved in domestic politics, making new loans to repay the old ones (Li et al., 2015).

As Easterly concludes, <<the IMF displays one of the classic symptoms of Planner's disease: it keeps adopting the same standard and paternalistically invasive approaches over and over again to reach a never-reached objective. The repetition itself shows the failure of previous attempts at short-term stabilisation>> (Easterly, 2007, p.759).

Mary Anderson, Dayna Brown and Isabella Jean (2012) have provided cumulative evidence of a degree of paternalistic control over who can receive funds and what people can do with them. From late 2005 to 2009, they carried out “Collaborative Learning Projects” to chronicle the experiences of people who live in societies that are recipients of international aid. More than 125 international aid organisations joined the Listening Project in twenty aid-recipient countries, conducting conversations with people from broad cross-sections of society, from government officials with bilateral aid negotiations through civil society activists, small-business owners, marginalised groups and typical villagers.

Despite the wide variety of those interviewed, the conversations revealed remarkably consistent patterns and similar international assistance evaluations. Those interviewed by the Listening Project identified funding procedures as contributing to and reinforcing the paternalistic assumptions that constitute international aid’s narrative. As a starting point, it is important to specify that donors want to ensure that aid agencies projects are worthy of their funding. Aid agencies proposals must have a logical framework and include information about where and when assistance will be provided, what expected results, and how these results will be monitored and reported, all encapsulated in the language of “benchmarks” of success funds (Tirole, 2017). Thus, aid agencies decide policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring even before they arrive in their area. They design pre-packaged projects without consulting with the local communities about what they want and need instead of imposing a limited vision of what is good for the community. Although agencies claim to use participatory assessment tools, such as household surveys, focus groups, questionnaires and community meetings, to identify local priorities and needs, aid-receivers complain that these assessment tools function as “straight jackets”. Assessment tools collect information in predetermined and externally designed categories (Zeller et al., 2004). Specifically, they are focused on whether people want what is being offered or not, rather than on hearing people discuss their priorities and suggestions for development support. To be accepted in the development project, aid-receivers using assessment tools must give the appearance of agreeing with the terms of aid exchange and sharing the goals shaped by the political environments in which aid agencies operate (Baaz, 2007).

Aid agencies themselves recognise the shortcomings of their participatory assessment tools and protest against donors policies. Another important question that the paper wants to answer is: Is it a consultation with communities to get approval for a project that has been predetermined, or really to decide jointly and to work together?. As we have seen, funding procedures tailor projects that drive international action according to the donor’s priorities and funding restrictions rather than local preferences and needs. Some donors and agencies have very little understanding. It is the restriction of the aid receivers behavioural choice set, determined by aid receivers priorities and needs interfering with funding procedures, that comes across as paternalistic. The paternalistic approach of funding procedures restricting people’s involvement in recipient societies in the selection criteria for allocating donors funds is reported by many to be treating them as powerless or ignorant. Most donors and agencies use the standardised procedures to determine fund allocation leave little space to listen to local people’s ideas and options, who often disagree with the premise and intent of programmatic strategies and decisions. For instance, the president of an association in Mali complains that the donors never take the time to consult with and listen to beneficiaries. Simultaneously, a ministry official in Timor-Leste protests that some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) decide how to distribute funds without letting the ministry know. Donors and aid agencies talk about participatory development. Still, people in recipient societies argue that being informed about fund-allocation programmes and their rationale is not enough if donors and agencies are unwilling to change what they do and how they do it based on what they hear from aid receivers. Aid-receivers sometimes think that how funds are allocated is wrong. Yet, donors and agencies continue to determine allocating funds according to externally established goals and priorities. Such fund-allocation programmes are paternalistic.

They do not consider that local people might know their contexts better than outsiders and might be better able to shape the distribution of funds to meet their specific needs. Donors and agencies assume they are aware of every problem faced by aid-recipient societies and can implement fund-allocation programmes accordingly. Still, these programmes are sometimes troubling in the socio-economic and political realities where they are applied. Procedures to assess how to allocate funds overlook variations in circumstances and cultures and lead to complex distributional decisions resulting in the misallocation and waste of international donors funding. For instance, donors funding to support “refugee return” policies, promoted by donors committed to post-war reconstruction and multi-ethnicity, can sometimes worsen inter-ethnic tensions rather than reduce them. During the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, for example, people who fled the fighting received aid to rebuild their houses, while those who did not leave the area received little or nothing. The donors funding supporting “refugee returns” increased the resentment of the people who remained in the warzone, who were angered by the selection criteria for getting funds and thought everyone affected deserves the same treatment.

Therefore, reconciliation policies made with good intent had unforeseen cascading effects, including the worsening of inter-ethnic tensions, rather than encouraging cooperation and peace as intended these policies.

From a paternalistic perspective, pre-planned procedures for establishing where and to whom to allocate funds

concentrate power in donors and agencies hands and fail to engage with local communities ideas and options, which might understand their problems opportunities for action better than outsiders do or can. One of the most frequently discussed outcomes of this paternalistic approach in funding procedures is donors, and aid agencies lack accountability to those they are trying to help (Winters, 2010). Accountability tools adopted by donors and agencies are many, such as field visits, inviting anonymous feedback about projects to be left in complaints boxes, or audits. The agencies assess their professionalism and reliability according to international standards. However, these monitoring and evaluation tools are mainly failing. They are included in the agencies reports, which, to ensure continued funding for a series of projects, are directly tied to the “objectives” specified in the initial proposal. Those already established parameters also shape the tools and feedback. Flexibility and responsiveness to contextual changes are therefore dramatically limited. The result is that little input from local communities about the more extensive and lasting impacts of any activity penetrates. There is a short analysis of what might improve future performances. Therefore, the international aid system suffers from a lack of accountability because aid agencies reports must be in line with the “objectives” previously agreed by the donors and may leave out so much that they represent very little local communities reality (Cordery, 2019).

When funding procedures originate externally, local communities feel that the relationship between external aid providers and internal aid-receivers involves a dynamic of innate and expected inequality. The externally driven approach to international aid turns aid-receivers into “objects” of others planning and decision-making, rather than engaging them as independent civil society actors able to take the lead in strengthening their existing capacities and social structures. It reinforces the image of passive aid-receivers who cannot use the money in the right way, in contrast to the idea of efficient, competent and reliable aid-providers (Baaz, 2005). So, this work aims to demonstrate that the analogy between aid-receivers and children is pertinent. Similarly to how parents behave with their children, donors and agencies extend paternalistic care to aid-receivers. They do not entrust them to make future-oriented, self-improving decisions with donors money (Baker, 2005). As many people in recipient societies suggest, the current funding procedures are an inadequate mechanism for promoting development. They negate genuine relationship building that provides valuable information to explore shared values and design non-paternalistic solutions that jointly embody these values.

4. Paternalistic aid in a deontological perspective

Our research methodology analyses how the paternalistic assumptions in international aid’s narrative is deontological. From a deontological perspective, the paternalistic aspects of international assistance tend to deny the privilege and proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, use and interpret experience in his way (Dworkin, 1972). Such paternalistic aspects are morally problematic as they can imply acting without showing respect and consideration for local communities dignity. Since people say they “feel used” in activities others design and run, the paternalistic system of international assistance is often connected to a growing sense of powerlessness (Anderson et al., 2012). Paternalistically driven service is disempowering because local communities observe that they have little or no control over projects designed and run by outsiders. As a consequence, local communities have little power to manage their own lives. This lack of power feeds into a sense of being disrespected. It conveys that people who receive assistance have no experience or knowledge that can be useful concerning their problems and action opportunities (Anderson et al., 2012). Aid-providers are likely to send implicit messages of disrespect, for instance, when they do not listen carefully when local communities are giving information, but clock-watch and appear hurried, failing then to adjust aid projects in the light of the community’s ideas. International donors and aid agencies fail to consider and support existing capabilities and institutions because, as a frustrated and disappointed government ministry staff member in Afghanistan complains, they’ll believe there is a lack of knowledge and capacity and that outsiders have to transfer their skills (Anderson et al., 2012).

Similarly, a community member in Sri Lanka denounces international donors and aid agencies undervaluing local capacity, although local communities have engineers and experts. Perhaps the most pernicious effect of this devaluation of indigenous power is the message that the international aid system sends to people in recipient societies. With its paternalistic attitudes and the provision of gifts, the aid system can undermine people’s dignity in recipient societies, further excluding and disenfranchising the poor (Baaz, 2005). Indeed, the paternalistic aid system may imply that the poor cannot take responsibility for developing solutions to their problems, thereby weakening their voice and the role they should play as active participants in the assistance process. A Listening Project report in the Philippines voices humiliation when some foreign NGOs ignore the ideas and capacities of local communities and even look down on them, opting for a more paternalistic and top-down approach to international assistance (Cordery, 2019).

As a local NGO leader on the Thai–Burma border admits, these foreign NGOs hurt their self-esteem (Anderson et al., 2012).

Another Listening Project report in Bosnia-Herzegovina documents how an increasing number of NGOs still behave as their bosses, failing to consult local people organisations over many aspects of the assistance process.

This lack of consultation about the setting of priorities, project design, decision-making, and the management of participants, materials, and funds again hurts the poor's self-esteem. Such self-esteem, which paternalistic international assistance undermines, is at the basis of the poor's dignity, as embedded in their autonomy and freedom to use and interpret experience in their way, that is, to run their own lives, to make their own choices, and to pursue their happiness. The importance deontologists attribute to autonomy and freedom as social and political values raises severe doubts about the legitimacy of paternalistic interference in the choices of autonomous, informed and competent individuals for the sake of promoting their interests and well-being. Many deontologists maintain that, with autonomy/freedom being an absolute and foundational good, all other goods are of instrumental value: they are not good in themselves except in so far as promoting freedom and autonomy (Brummer, 1986). It follows that, in the contemporary aid narrative, the shortcomings of Paternalism manifest in the way in which it competes with the values of personal sovereignty, namely, freedom and autonomy. According to Joseph Raz (1988), a person's life is free and autonomous if it is his creation to a considerable extent. Freedom and autonomy refer to the capacity to live one's life according to one's ends and commitments to realise those social and political values crucial to individuals conception of the good and their well-being. As Feinberg et al. suggest (1992), morality requires that we respect each person's freedom and autonomy. Respect for a person's independence and autonomy means concern for the dignity of his unfettered voluntary choices. When others' interests are not directly involved, choices made by agents endowed with rational capability are deemed to be clothed with moral dignity. They are the "sole rightful determinants" of the agents' action, allowing them to have adequate control over their lives and act based on an independent reflection on what is true, right and good. Feinberg (1992) continues the life of an agent after all his life; it belongs to him and no one else. For that reason alone, he must be the one to decide, for better or worse, what is to be done with it in that private realm. In this perspective, choosing is a good that is independent of the wisdom of what is chosen. A firmly anti-paternalist view of development assistance can thus be derived from a deontological approach committed to freedom and autonomy. Being neutral, as between different conceptions of the good life, this non-paternalistic approach demands *prima facie* equal respect for all the choices made by local communities and ultimately infuses local communities with pride and confidence in themselves, in their ideas and capacities (Bebbington et al., 2013).

5. Paternalistic aid in a consequentialist perspective

From a consequentialist perspective, paternalistic projects, executed in isolation from the local community's decision-making processes or attempted in opposition to the community's aims and objectives (Riddell, 2012), are problematic incapable of alleviating poverty systematically and effectively. Paternalistic projects have only a limited chance of success, particularly over the longer term. They tend to undermine teamwork and curb the development of the capacity to make intelligent and responsible choices in the future. When the poor are not consulted in pre-packaged projects, they often feel sidelined and are left with questions, suspicion and disappointed expectations. For instance, since the terms under which some people receive aid, and others do not are unclear, the words will to many people seem unfair. As Anderson, Brown, and Jean explain (2012), Western concepts of vulnerability and worthiness do not always match local ideas of fairness. Minority ethnic groups in Cambodia, for example, state that everyone is equal and deserves the same aid. They disagree with the kind of poverty assessment made by foreign donors and aid agencies, based on whether the family owns a motorbike or a wooden house for the richer or no motorbike and bamboo house for the poorer (Taylor, 2006). As these groups complain, aid-allocation programmes are often designed without specific communities in mind. That makes it challenging to consider variations in circumstances and cultures to meet selected organisations' particular needs. In a similar vein, people in a refugee camp in Lebanon protest against the decision <<to give bread [...] only to families with more than four members [...] the ones who need it are the widows, the old couple who is living alone without relatives [...] the big families usually have members who can work>> (Anderson et al., 2012, p.51). In Lebanon, people say that it is right for aid to be provided to widows and people without relatives.

In other countries, people say that larger families should be the focus. The issue is context, which local governments, organisations, and communities know better than outsiders do. Failure to consult the poor or consider their specific needs and circumstances undermines the genuine relationship-building between aid agencies and aid-receivers, which should be at the heart of systematic and practical development assistance. The lack of a genuine relationship belies the aid agencies commitment to establishing partnerships and helping communities identify their resources and build on them. Benson (2014) claims that local communities are often expected to embrace the Western cultural understanding of justice, property rights and market competition.

As results in a disconnection between policy aspirations and assumptions on the one hand and the reality of local culture and norms on the other.

At the bottom, it imposes a biased vision of what is right for local communities instead of considering what the organisations think is best for themselves given their specific social, economic and political circumstances. As Benson (2014) suggests, this is a form of Paternalism. In Hearn's words (2007), Western states increasingly attempt

to “indigenous” their agencies by creating local branches to bolster their legitimacy. However, the local components remain in the control of the West. This seeming reform of the paternalistic approach to international assistance is, therefore, merely an illusion. Understandably, local communities will not want to waste any more time and effort in so-called participatory processes that reflect paternalistic projects’ predominance. Local communities are unwilling to do so because these projects, identified as belonging to outside aid agencies, are not in line with local needs and priorities and because they resent the fact that they were bypassed in the first place. When local communities do not fully accept agencies projects as their own, teamwork is endangered. According to rural villagers in Ecuador, acceptance brings trust, and trust brings cooperation. If one of the two factors is lacking, the result is the work of only one set of brains (Anderson et al., 2012). Consequently, it is unlikely that local communities feel ownership or responsibility for aid projects’ future decided and implemented by outside agencies (Baaz, 2005). A local NGO staff member in Cambodia explains that if the communities are not sufficiently engaged with a project of external agents, and cannot shape it according to their capacities, value systems and outlook on life (Bebbington et al., 2013), then they will not manage it for the long term. Little or no ownership of such a project exists, and short-lived benefits result. It is a problem because local communities are expected to take responsibility for implementing programmes developed to pursue aid projects when the assistance ends. Paternalistically driven assistance can engender passivity and undermine local communities’ capacity to provide the circumstances for their well-being on a sustainable and long-term basis. It might leave the poor vulnerable and dependent on external factors to continue the aid programmes (Le Grand, 2020). Far from promoting long-lasting development and independence, paternalistic assistance is likely to impede the poor in developing their capacity to make autonomous, informed and competent choices that strengthen their existing capabilities and institutions.

The development of this capacity is embedded in man’s permanent interests as a progressive being (Alkire, 2010). Intended as a process that leads to a condition of personal maturity and long-lasting independence, it is one of our higher human capacities. It is strictly linked to the full exercise of other higher human powers, such as the capability to carry out one’s life plans according to a unique set of values. Rather than becoming independent entities able to take control of their own life, local communities in the new aid regime are likely to appeal to external funding and write proposals according to external agendas for their continued existence. They are unprepared to continue with and support the projects begun by international aid agencies. Since local communities experience difficulty leading politically, socially and economically secure lives without outside help, their authority and competence building might be damaged. They will struggle to break free of the recipient categories because international assistance, as it is now given, leaves little room if any, for people to transition from dependence to independence. Therefore, the paternalistic service system may feed a sense of dependency and powerlessness that local communities dislike and decry instead of developing processes to help them move from being a target to increase self-reliance levels. Conversely, local communities’ participation in all phases of an aid project, from conception to design and planning, implementation and final evaluation, is expected to lead to greater local ownership of the aid project and sustained results (Cobbett, 1987). Most people at all levels of the aid apparatus see an essential linkage between the three principles of participation, ownership and sustainability, on the one hand, and the improvement of the impacts of international aid, on the other. When they feel informed, consulted and respected, aid-receivers can participate more effectively in the aid project because it is easier to be involved in its preparation, funding and goals.

Aid-receivers can plan regarding resources and efforts and integrate aid provider inputs into their own lives and plans (Anderson et al., 2012), which allows them to own the aid project and be active participants in creating their future. A Listening Team reporting Cambodia discusses how local participation contributes to an environment in which aid-receivers have the knowledge, confidence and outside support to do their part to fight the lack of transparency and to improve accountability (Anderson et al., 2012). Accountability for aid projects, that is, the extent to which donors and agencies respond to aid-receivers needs, depends on how much aid-receivers can provide information to and control donors and agencies’ actions. Thus, aid receivers active participation would be a big step forward from the accountability-free zone that donors and agencies now enjoy (Easterly, 2007). Further, local participation improves international aid impacts because aid-receivers accept outcomes they may, not themselves have suggested. When aid-receivers trust a system that creates plans based on real discussions and their actual involvement in making decisions that affect their lives (Anderson et al., 2012), they could also be open to and accept ideas and options that may differ from those put forward by them. Acceptance and trust are critical for the longer-term relationships based on a partnership between aid agencies and aid receivers.

In a partnership, aid agencies work with and through formal and informal local structures of aid-receivers to support aid-receivers capacities for positive and lasting changes. When the agencies leave, aid-receivers are likely to own a project and take responsibility for sustaining progress on a long-term basis (Palagashvili and Williamson, 2018).

6. Towards a non-paternalistic aid paradigm

The fact that people in aid-receiving countries express their confidence that the idea of international aid can be

redefined away from a paternalistic delivery system, and reinvented to support collaborative planning, means that they believe aid can stand a chance of helping the poor who need help the most (Milovich, 2018). The aid enterprise requires a new international paradigm that can be a significant force for positive change. The challenge now is to dismantle the counterproductive global aid system of top-down delivery of resources, which distorts the relationships between aid agencies and the poor and finds ways to develop a non-paternalistic approach to international aid, driven by local priorities, reflects the agencies of the poor. All people indeed have the same fundamental interests; however, the policies that respond to these interests would vary to fit different cultural contexts. The international aid community is challenged to provide aid in the context of internally created goals and priorities and to judge its work against these goals and priorities. In other words, the aid community should work within the framework of development policies drawn up and implemented by people in recipient countries and receive feedback from these people about the usefulness and impacts of any procedure. The aid community's funding and accounting approaches should genuinely correspond to local realities and rely on existing cultural contexts that force and maintain accountability. Easterly (2007) postulates a mechanism to improve accountability: a voucher scheme in which donors give vouchers to needy individuals and communities, which can then be used to finance aid agencies offering the interventions, be they vaccinations, food supplements or the realisation of larger projects such as building roads and wells, that they most want or need.

This voucher scheme would supply better information about which interventions the low demand according to their particular socio-political and economic context and provide more feedback from the poor to accountable agents concerning which interventions are useful to respond to their priorities and needs. Many development ethicists and practitioners, poverty analysts, including development economists and civil society activists (Harriss, 2001), increasingly agree that there is a need to acknowledge the poor and their advocates as sources of knowledge, decision-making and action about their development policies, rather than seeing them merely as passive beneficiaries of actions and activities decided by benevolent outsiders. No matter how poor, every society has formal and informal institutions that provide the potential for people to make decisions and take collective action to implement funding policies and accountability. This existing capacity, which varies according to the specific cultural context, is necessary to allow the poor to use the resources they need to escape poverty. Therefore, international aid providers should recognise existing home-grown institutions through which the poor define their own needs and priorities and monitor policies that respond to those needs and preferences. Such institutions must be supported if they are already strong or helped develop if they are still weak. According to Deveaux (2018), the poor and their advocates' perspectives can bring to anti-poverty strategies may be especially important because their agendas differ from those of paternalistic aid-providers. Many people in developing countries aim to reduce material deprivation and foreground the poor's participation and input in devising and directing poverty reduction strategies. It encourages a gradual recognition of the poor's prospective agency, without which genuine empowerment is impossible.

Such recognition is connected to an expanded view of anti-poverty strategies, including social, economic, and political empowerment of those living in poverty. When the very development process is empowering, the poor are no longer dependent on a paternalistic delivery system (Levitt, 2001). The goal is, in fact, that of increasing the poor's ability to provide for their own needs and priorities independently and without the continued need to rely on outside help. This empowerment-focused development ethics provides ample space for social, economic and political self-determination as the latter is crucial to the individuals' conceptions of the good and their welfare. For instance, non-paternalistic strategies for poverty reduction would focus on improving the poor's health and education. The poor can raise the payoff to themselves by dint of their efforts to better their lives. Health facilities, education, and other social opportunities facilitate economic participation. The opportunities to utilise financial resources for consumption, production, and exchange can generate personal abundance and public resources for social facilities. Education programmes can also enhance political participation; in the forms of opportunities, people have to determine who should govern and what principles and scrutinise and criticise authorities. Without any formal education, people are cut off from a full understanding of their nation's history and political and economic structure. They are limited in their ability to promote their financial security and, more broadly, pursue issues that interest them (Nussbaum, 2011). The non-paternalistic idea of international aid suggested by the poor and their advocates will eventually enable the poor to be counted among those who can reliably serve as agents of justice instead of approaches to global justice that mostly focus on the humanitarian role and duties of powerful external agents (Baker, 2015).

The theory of change that lies behind this non-paternalistic idea of international aid may be clearly stated. International support expands the range of potential paths toward positive change that those living in poverty can consider and helps them explore these options and choose the one(s) that will most directly pursue their interests and the changes they seek.

International aid, the core values of which should be empowerment and self-determination, engages with the poor in weighing each option's costs and benefits and co-develop and co-implement a joint strategy for pursuing issues that interest the poor. The provision of microcredit, for example, would be a mechanism for the poor to access more

ample opportunities for work, exchange, collective action and the acquisition of skills (Easterly, 2007). Some projects led by the International Labour Organization and Grameen Bank are successful examples of a non-paternalistic approach to effective interventions that expand the options under consideration by those living in poverty. As we have seen, the empowerment-based perspective adopted by the poor and their advocates move beyond an oversimplified view of poverty as strictly a lack of means of subsistence and comes to acknowledge the critical demand for full social, economic and political self-determination. This empowerment-based perspective is at the basis of a new non-paternalistic model of international aid that recognises the importance of the participation of poor communities in development projects that are meant to help them. According to people interviewed by the Listening Project, implementing this non-paternalistic international aid model may be stated in: Early Listening Funding, Proposal Development, Disbursement of Funds and Reporting/Accounting. First, providers of aid would listen carefully to various members of a prospective recipient country or community.

Aid providers would be sensitive to what they heard when developing a funding proposal. Funds would cover the costs of exploratory field visits and conversations with aid-receivers at the design stage to build a genuine relationship of trust and respect at the heart of the provider–receive connection, to facilitate the identification of local needs priorities. A template-free funding proposal would then be jointly written by aid providers and a recipient group identified as trusted by the local community; others not be included in the proposal-writing should nevertheless be aware of it and have the possibility to judge it by playing a pivotal role as interlocutors and advocates through the provision of feedback to mutually accountable aid agents, namely, donors, aid providers and aid-receivers, on what they know and what they most want and need (Winters, 2010). In a funding proposal, the strategies to respond to local needs and priorities would first be written in an exploratory fashion that invites the reflection and discussion of many people with different perspectives and experiences. The funding proposal would be considered definitive only when aid agents <<autonomous actors committed to (...) relationships of mutual trust and influence that enable renegotiating expectations>> (Brown, 2007, p.7) find common ground for analysis and the setting of priorities. Regarding the disbursement of funds, one idea would be to create some form of “bank account” from which aid-providers and aid-receivers could draw funds as needed, providing explanations at each withdrawal time the donor all involved in the aid process.

It would make aid more accountable and effective. In a collaborative approach, aid agents would together monitor the disbursement and use of the funds. As development partners in a relationship of fundamental equality in terms of decision-making authority and power, aid agents would also decide together on specific ways to assess the effectiveness of co-generated strategies to influence and orient the particular purposes of aid (Agbonifo, 2009). In a similar vein, they would decide together on the appropriate timing of accounting reports and mechanisms. As in the case of funding proposals, recipient countries or communities would have the possibility of contributing to publically available information and the ability to review them. Aid agents should spend most of their time and effort co-developing and co-implementing a joint solution for complex and interdependent development challenges rather than writing proposals or reports.

From this analysis emerges the result that this more participatory approach to development involves mutual insider/outsider analysis of the existing institutions and cultural context in which aid is provided, explorations of the options that the poor can consider, and the generation of non-paternalistic development strategies based on people’s dynamism and capacities. Suppose there is a key to successful development. In that case, it lies in local people’s participation in generating the plan for poverty reduction that ultimately encourages their long-lasting development and self-determination.

7. Conclusions

This paper challenges the mainstream belief that paternalistic aid as it is currently provided to the poor in developing countries is a universally acceptable policy that Western donors and support agencies should keep on adopting. With its paternalistic aspects and the provision of gifts, foreign aid has been widely portrayed by donors and agencies as promoting the economic development of receiving nations with all the linked benefits of prosperity. It is the key, so it is thought, to tackling world poverty and achieving global justice. But it is a very different story for the poor.

Paternalistic aid can have significant adverse effects on recipient countries peoples. Broadly, donors and support agencies prefer a “one-size-fits-all approach” that tends to ignore the contextual differences among countries where aid is provided. From a paternalistic perspective, donors and agencies fail to consider that local communities understand their contexts better than outsiders and may have the information and knowledge needed to carry out practical development projects.

The formulation, implementation and monitoring of development projects paternalistically originate from external donors and agencies, who may know little about the real problems of the people they try to help. The innovative paternalistic approach to development projects of this paper involves a dynamic of innate and expected inequality

that negates genuine relationship-building between aid agencies and aid-receivers, which should be at the heart of accountable development aid. Connected as they are to a growing sense of powerlessness, paternalistic projects are morally problematic.

They can undermine the poor's self-esteem, which forms the core of their dignity in their taking responsibility for how their lives unfold over time. Furthermore, through the historical literature, our results explain how paternalistic projects only have a limited chance of success because they can curb the development of impoverished local communities capacity to continue implementing the specific aid programmes after the aid agencies leave. The poor acknowledge that foreign aid shortcomings do not lie but in how donors and agencies act according to a traditional model of paternalistically driven humanitarian support. Consequently, the poor still believe that foreign aid can stand a chance of improving their lives. They express their confidence that the traditional and paternalistic model of foreign aid can be replaced with a development model in which the political autonomy of the target for support is respected. Their suggestion, therefore, is to emphasise the genuine empowerment and participation of poor communities in both devising and directing strategies for poverty reduction. Without a reconsideration of aid forms, the donors and agencies will likely continue to provide substantial support without seeing the hoped-for results.

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