

hope invested in the creation of new, supposedly better policies. As I argue, such a choice of institutional arenas and bureaucratic technologies is not simply instrumental, but reflects activists' belief that policies have the power to bring about change through their capacity to order social realities. According to this perspective, the power of policy lies in the seductive promise of an ordered and systematised world. While strongly bureaucratic in its nature, policy becomes an aesthetic tool, expressive of aid activists' hopes and dreams for an organised and ordered reality, a fantasy of a harmonious structure that will eventually orientate good practice, leading to positive global change and the eradication of poverty. As I will demonstrate, even though aid policies are bureaucratic technologies themselves, their aim is not only to govern practice and people, but also to orchestrate visions of the future and fantasies of success.

This chapter also describes the final step in the process of emerging as a donor – the stabilisation of an official, state-run aid apparatus, through the establishment of the first Polish Act on International Aid. In the process of becoming a donor, the creation of an effective, perfect aid system has been one of the key goals on the aid activists' agenda. Just like the progressive professionalisation of aid NGOs described in previous chapters, the formulation of a state-run, centralised system was also envisaged as proof of the mature, expert and modern status of Polish aid. As such, the creation of a policy-based system was the ultimate requirement (both symbolically and literally) for all those who wanted to be accepted into the exclusive Western club of donors. It was one of the markers separating 'established' from 'emerging' donors, and as such was pressed by external stakeholders: the EU, OECD/DAC, the UN but also various Western aid agencies, think-tanks and NGOs.

Examining the continuous efforts to fulfil 'Western standards' and endlessly reform Polish aid, the chapter discusses the role that transnational networks play in national politics and aid. It demonstrates how the competition of aid providers, and the hierarchical arrangement of donors reflected in their categorisations as established versus emergent donors, hinders any possibility for creating a truly new, revolutionary approach to international aid. Representatives of Poland often argue that by being free from colonial guilt and 'knowing what it is like to be at the receiving end of the aid chain' they have a comparative advantage over 'established donors'. However, subscribing to the myths of modernity, desperate to become recognised in the international arena as an 'established donor', they in fact end up following the dictates and patterns of their Western counterparts.

As a result, emerging donors end up replicating solutions that are typical of Western powers. In this model, the emphasis is placed on the creation of the best possible system of foreign aid. Perceived as the main determinant of foreign aid, conditioning all success or failure, it becomes a central element dominating the efforts of aid professionals, redirecting their attention from other possible avenues for bringing about social change. The very belief that the perfect foreign aid system might actually be created perpetuates and sustains the faith in international assistance. According to this view, what is needed to achieve global solidarity is simply yet another modification of the system, yet another redefinition of aid, yet another reform of the aid apparatus. As a result, the process of emerging as a donor is never complete and never satisfactory. It can be perpetuated forever.

Note

1. The term ‘mission’ is usually used in reference to humanitarian operations: urgent, conducted in difficult circumstances. However, recent blurring of the division and differences between humanitarian and development action (Duffield 2002, 2007; Stirrat 2006; Drażkiewicz 2017), and the movement of personnel from humanitarian appointments to development work, has resulted in frequent appropriation of the term in development as well.

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