The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer

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Published by African Minds

Weingart, Peter and Susanne Koch.
The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer: The Impact of Foreign Aid Experts on Policy-making in South Africa and Tanzania.
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Chapter 4

MULTIPLE ACTORS, COLLIDING INTERESTS: THE MAIN PLAYERS OF THE AID GAME

We, Heads of State, Ministers and representatives of developing and developed countries, heads of multilateral and bilateral institutions, representatives of different types of public, civil society, private, parliamentary, local and regional organisations meeting here in Busan, Republic of Korea, recognise that we are united by a new partnership that is broader and more inclusive than ever before, founded on shared principles, common goals and differential commitments for effective international development. (Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2011: 1)

In December 2011, about 3 000 delegates from governments, aid agencies, civil society and private sector institutions met at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in South Korea to assess the current state of aid relations, and to define a future agenda. The event culminated in the signing of the Busan Partnership agreement whose introductory statement proclaims a “new partnership that is broader and more inclusive than ever before” based on “shared principles” and “common goals” (Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2011: 1, see quotation above).

The partnership rhetoric prevailing in the contemporary aid discourse usually disguises the fact that aid is an arena of multiple, often competing interests. Figure 2 schematically displays major interests on the donor and recipient side at the level of governments, organisations and individual actors.

Figure 2 represents a simplifying abstraction of the respective interests of donor and recipient governments, their respective administrative authorities and individual actors. It does not claim to capture all particular interests existing at the different levels and excludes other players such as non-governmental organisations, foundations, lobby groups, academia and elites. For an attempt to illustrate the multiplicity of interests in German aid, see Nuscheler (2005).
the web of interests comprises political and economic objectives of nation states, organisational concerns of donor and recipient bureaucracies, and individual incentives of government members and development experts. In the following section, a closer look first focuses on the recipient side, then shifts to the donors. Finally, the spotlight is put on a group of actors who are part of the donor system, but who pursue distinct goals as knowledge brokers, namely the epistemic community of development experts. Summarising the observations of this section will be an understanding of the linkage of aid and interests that forms the complex setting for the advisory processes at the core of aid practices.

### Recipient governments and bureaucracies

While attracting additional resources is a primary purpose of recipient governments under pressure to cope with underfinanced budgets, they do pursue other interests in receiving assistance. Development projects potentially increase the public popularity of government heads, and bring along material rewards for the officials in charge. Moreover, aid is a strategic tool used in foreign relations, even by countries dependent on external support.
CHAPTER 4 Multiple Actors, Colliding Interests: The Main Players of the Aid Game

Financial resources

Financial shortages are the chief motive for entering aid negotiations on the side of recipient governments. In low-income countries, external funding makes up a substantial share of the budget, in some cases up to 50%. It is a crucial amount for development expenses used for expanding road infrastructure, improving water supply or building schools and hospitals, amongst others. Given that governments of developing nations often spend a large proportion of their budget on recurrent costs, many investment projects can only be realised with donor funding, even in relatively resource-rich countries such as South Africa (Bond 2001). Authorities in areas such as environment, which receive a lower share of domestic resources, especially depend on external financing to carry out programmes. In countries such as Tanzania where even priority sectors are underfinanced, donor money critically extends line ministries’ scope of action.

Public popularity

Opening a new construction site, inaugurating a day care centre or taking a power plant into operation are opportune events for policy-makers to demonstrate their efforts and achievements to the public. Aside from expanding the financial scope of governments, aid contributes to increasing the popularity of political actors. In Tanzania, pulling off aid is framed as a commendable merit. Government websites proudly advertise new international aid agreements, with pictures showing ministerial leaders shaking hands with donor representatives. Development cooperation activities are omnipresent in the media. Rarely a day goes by without at least one newspaper article covering a donor-funded project implemented by the government. The tenor of reports is usually very positive; negative effects of aid are seldom addressed. Policy-makers in Tanzania thus have an incentive to keep the status quo in terms of using foreign funding, although the government officially seeks to reduce its budgetary dependence (Tanzania Ministry of Finance 2013). As a retired government official commented about politicians in his country:

They don’t want to cut aid. We are all afraid of losing the polls. And that is something which is going to hurt us in the long run. (Interview 64)

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40 In contrast to the development budget, the recurrent budget is absorbed by operational expenses including salaries and wages for civil servants, the purchases of goods and services, and payments on national debts (Ministry of Finance 2012: 7).
41 The Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) initiative in South Africa’s Cape Floristic Region, for instance, very much gained from GEF funding which at times amounted to half of the overall budget (Global Environment Facility Evaluation Office 2008). For details, see Chapter 7.
**Individual rewards**

Not only high-level politicians, but also staff in ministries and agencies benefit individually from aid. Particularly among senior government cadres, donor-funded activities are considered as “potentially lucrative and status enhancing” (Chêne 2009: 6) since they make available tangible rewards to the functionaries in charge. As a Tanzanian civil society actor pointed out, monetary and non-monetary benefits constitute primary incentives for government members to engage with donor representatives:

> I sit and talk with you because I think, maybe I’ll get a study tool for capacity-building and I’ll get my allowances or, you know, maybe through you I’ll get a scholarship for my daughter to go to university or there’s a tender to order something and I will get my commission. That’s what it becomes, it becomes an opportunity for rent seeking. (Interview 70)

Extra payments for government officials involved in aid activities are common practice in most recipient countries. Donors have co-created “per diem and allowance regime[s]” (Chêne 2009: 5) which are well entrenched, particularly in countries where the public service is severely underpaid. In many African states, government wages have been declining as a result of fiscal adjustment policies, with the consequence that salaries not only at lower levels hardly suffice to make a living. Receiving extra pay in the form of per diems and allowances has become “one of the most popular coping strategies for compensating for low public sector wages in the developing world” (Chêne 2009: 4). According to a survey among public servants in Tanzania and Uganda, the large majority of them (77%) considered allowances as equally important as their basic salary, some (13%) assessed extra pay as even more important than the latter (Therkildsen & Tidemand 2007). While allowances were actually introduced to reimburse officials for real expenses (e.g. travel reimbursement), they have become a second pillar of their income. The fact that they are relatively high compared to basic wages makes them even more attractive. A study conducted by the Tanzanian Policy Forum made the following calculation with data from the year 2009: a middle-level officer could earn about a third of his monthly salary (TSh 384 850, government scale TGS D) within three days by attending a workshop outside Dar es Salaam for which he receives a per diem of TSh 35 000 (Policy Forum 2009). As rates for foreign travels are even higher, “a civil servant going on a 5-day trip abroad easily doubles his or her salary,  

42 In Tanzania, donors fund around ten different types of allowances, such as per diems, honoraria or extra-duty top-ups. For an overview and details on what these allowances cover, see Rubin (2012).
even if this is the highest paid civil servant around” (Policy Forum 2009: 6). Thus, participating in events outside their offices pays off for government staff. Donor-funded workshops, trainings or conferences have become coveted extraordinary duties.

Competing for key public officials, aid agencies in some cases even offer “attractive international daily rates” (Chêne 2009: 5) to bring them to their events. For the agencies, the per diem system helps to meet their own targets insofar as the number of participants is commonly used as a performance indicator (Hepworth 2009, as cited in Policy Forum 2009; Søreide et al. 2012). While paying allowances ensures attendance, salary top-ups paid to ministry officials concerned with donor projects aims to secure commitment on the counterpart side. As anecdotal evidence shows, this can make up to 40% increase in salary for the civil servants in charge (Rubin 2012).

In Tanzania, cash incentives have become a decisive element in the interaction between donors and government officials. A World Bank expert who at the time of the interview was relatively new in the country commented:

In Tanzania, if you have a meeting, you’re expected to pay people to show up and if you don’t pay them to show up, if they don’t care about it – which usually they don’t, cause usually it’s something that’s cared about by someone else, imposed upon them – then they don’t show up. So (...) everybody lines up at the back of these meetings to get little brown envelopes and it’s shocking to me to see that happen – shocking. (Interview 46)

The institutionalisation of this practice has profound consequences not only for development cooperation, but also for the organisational culture in developing countries’ bureaucracies. Several studies have pointed out how the allowance regime creates room for fraud and corruption (Smith 2003; Ridde 2010; Vian et al. 2013), encouraging “opportunistic behaviour ‘to get a piece of the cake’” (Søreide et al. 2012: xiv). The individual benefits affiliated with aid activities lead government members to accept unnecessary support, to attend trainings irrespective of their ‘capacity-building’ use and to prolong processes in order to get projects extended (Chêne 2009; Vian et al. 2013). A natural resources

43 In 2013, donors in Tanzania withdrew their support to the Local Government Reform Programme after an audit revealed the misuse of funds, amongst others for “excessive and unjustified per diem allowances and fees” (Mosoba & Mugarula 2013).

44 The misuse of allowances particularly in the context of capacity-building activities has been documented several times. A study on donor support for water resource management in East Africa found that “during a two year period of working alongside East African practitioners it became apparent that there were numerous discrete training and workshop based capacity building initiatives run by donors and external support agencies covering the same or similar material. An example is provided by an agency of an East African government who over a period of two years were engaged in three separate residential training courses which covered the same topics, were
expert working for a Nordic donor in Tanzania explained the delays in her programme on the counterpart side as follows:

*I think it’s deliberate that they were only able to use half of the money that we were giving them for two years – they used it in three and a half years. And you know, somehow in my mind is the idea that if it lasts for six, seven years, it’s easier to get more daily allowances, all these per diems, discussion workshops organised and so on. So it kind of dilutes the whole thing.* (Interview 36)

Although donors have repeatedly claimed to tackle the self-made incentive problem by setting an end to extraordinary payments, the latter are still common practice and sometimes just termed differently. A study on donor compensations in Tanzania, Malawi and Ethiopia cites a senior staff member of a UN organisation saying:

*UN organisations are now using all kinds of words to avoid the term ‘sitting allowance’ while in reality, they continue the practice. Very often, a cash payment of around TZS 80,000 is offered on top of ‘the meeting package’ – which includes accommodation and meals. In addition, they get a transport allowance – and this is an arrangement that can easily be manipulated. If they don’t get paid well they just leave – even if they have arrived at a hotel and have shown interest in the topic.* (Søreide et al. 2012: 35)

The policies and practices related to allowances certainly vary among aid agencies and across countries. While in Tanzania, individual rewards constitute a strong incentive on the recipient side to engage with donors, the situation is different in South Africa where public sector wages are comparably high, and allowances are not an issue affecting donor–recipient cooperation.

*Foreign relations*

In countries in which the financial assets of aid play less of a role for both a government’s budget and for actors involved, its non-monetary value as a strategic element of politics comes to the fore. This has particularly been emphasised by South African government officials; a director in the Department of Health stated in this regard:

attended largely by the same people, each workshop being organised and funded, with per diems and expenses, by a different source from within the donor community” (Hepworth 2009, as cited in Policy Forum 2009: 7).
ODA [official development cooperation] is all about what? It is all about foreign policy issues. It is all about strengthening our international relations. (Interview 18)

South Africa has never been financially dependent on foreign aid (see Chapters 3 and 6). A strong motivation of the government for becoming a recipient of official development assistance in 1994 was to re-build relationships after years of isolation by the international community. Obtaining financial and technical assistance was seen as a tool which would not only help economic development, but also foster political bonds and international trade. Even today, development cooperation is considered a central element of bi- and multilateral relations. Strengthening relationships with strategic partners is a main interest underlying aid which manifests in the fact that decisions on entering agreements for support are guided by directives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, as a senior official in the health department explained:

They prioritize those governments and their relationships. So for example, if an interest is around, just an example, China, (...) whatever that they will provide or that they will give, whether we have resources on it or not, we have to make sure that we negotiate as to how we want to work together in the health sector. (Interview 18)

The acceptance of aid is thus not solely dependent on actual needs; strategic considerations related to foreign policy priorities, trade or other interests play a role. This is not only the case in a resource-rich country such as South Africa, although it may have a more comfortable bargaining position than others. Even poorer African states, for example Benin, Kenya and Zimbabwe consider foreign policy interests when deciding whom to approach for assistance and whose offers to accept (Wright 1999). A recent study reports that Ethiopia “treats different donors in different ways and adapts its language and strategy accordingly” (Greenhill et al. 2013: 28). The fact that the Ethiopian government utilises aid relations in a very deliberate way is also corroborated by foreign policy documents and statements which emphasise the close linkage between development cooperation and diplomacy (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2002; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). The case of Ethiopia illustrates that even highly aid-dependent countries adopt a strategic approach in securing assistance, taking its significance for foreign relations into account.

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45 This is outlined in an influential article published in 1993 under Nelson Mandela’s name which set out the direction of South Africa’s foreign policy under an ANC-led government (Mandela 1993).
Donor countries and aid organisations

Donor governments provide aid not out of altruism or generosity. They engage in development cooperation not (only) for the sake of development, but because it serves themselves for multiple purposes (Easterly 2002; Browne 2006; Shikwati 2006; Lancaster 2007). While the extent to which aid is tied to such purposes varies, the general pattern is that political, economic and organisational interests are shaping donors’ aid policies.

Political and economic interests of donor governments

If aid was given with the aim to help those in greatest need, the poorest countries would receive the bulk of assistance. As statistics show, this is not the case. Among the top ten recipients of aid between 1980 and 2011 were states such as India, Iraq and China, as ranked in Table 1:

Table 1: Top ten recipients of aid worldwide based on net ODA received 1980–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Recipient country</th>
<th>Net ODA received 1960–2014 in USD million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>86 974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>86 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>71 545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>62 013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>61 301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>57 613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>56 487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>53 166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>52 870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>49 433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Despite the international community’s claim to focus on poverty reduction, an OECD survey of 2012 found a significant shift in aid allocations from least developed countries towards middle-income countries in the Far East and South and Central Asia (OECD 2013b). Various scholars, notably in the field of development economics, have shown that historical, economic and political ties decisively shape the direction of aid flows: former colonial powers such as the United Kingdom or France still provide substantial amounts of aid to their

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46 The indicator “Net official development assistance received (current USD)” includes loans and grants disbursed by DAC and non-DAC countries and multilateral institutions. Data were retrieved on 4 August 2016.
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Trade linkages have a significant impact on aid allocation, with donors targeting assistance preferably to their most important trading partners in the developing world (Berthélemy & Tichit 2004; Berthélemy 2006; Nunnenkamp & Thiele 2006; Younas 2008; Hoeffler & Outram 2011). The significance of political allegiance for aid is reflected by UN voting patterns: donor countries tend to give more aid to countries who vote in line with them (Alesina & Dollar 2000; Neumayer 2003; Dreher et al. 2009; Hoeffler & Outram 2011; Pincin 2012). All these findings indicate that donor governments select recipients not primarily on the basis of poverty rankings, but out of strategic considerations.

When official development assistance emerged after the Second World War, it was primarily legitimated with political interests. In the United States, President Truman in 1947 justified his request for economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey with the motivation that without assistance, both countries would fall under the influence of the Soviet Union. He introduced his speech to the Congress stating that “the foreign policy and the national security of this country [the United States] are involved” (Truman 1947). During the Cold War era, aid was widely used as a diplomatic instrument in order to win and keep allies, and thereby influence the geopolitical balance of power (Adamson 2006). Other countries such as Japan and Germany began to provide aid as a means of export promotion (Lancaster 2007). Development as a declared priority of aid came of age only during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, shifting the focus on economic growth and (at a later stage) poverty reduction in the developing world (Lancaster 2007).

Comparing legitimation patterns prevailing today, governments can broadly be divided into two groups: the first frames development cooperation as an instrument for safeguarding foreign policy and economic interests; the second acknowledges general interests, but emphasises the obligation of giving aid as

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47 In the period 1980–2004, 71% of UK aid and 51% of aid provided by France went to their respective former colonies (Hoeffler & Outram 2008: 23). Alesina and Dollar (2000: 55) found that “a non-democratic former colony gets about twice as much aid as a democratic non-colony”.

48 In our study, interviewees in both South Africa and Tanzania highlighted the fact that donors preferably channel aid to regions in which they have historic ties. A South African official engaged in the education sector told us that when donors entered the country at the dawn of democracy, “they knew exactly where and who they want to support, where their missionaries were before, and now they were closely related to those geographic areas” (Interview 21).

49 While development economists’ calculations generate evidence in the form of measurable results often presented as ‘hard facts’, we are cautious of some interpretations drawn from these findings insofar as they tend to include causal explanations which cannot be derived from the statistics produced. From our view, for instance, using only the correlation of UN voting patterns and aid flows as evidence for political interests in aid allocation is deficient insofar as it does not distinguish cause and effect.
an act of solidarity and shared responsibility. Exemplary justifications of aid in policy documents and statements of major donors are compiled in Table 2:

Table 2: Rationales legitimating aid in donor policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political and economic interests</th>
<th>Solidarity/responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States, Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development (22 September 2010): “The directive recognizes that development is vital to U.S. national security and is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative for the United States. It calls for the elevation of development as a core pillar of American power and charts a course for development, diplomacy and defense to mutually reinforce and complement one another in an integrated comprehensive approach to national security.”</td>
<td>Norway, White Paper on Development Policy (Report No. 13, 2008–2009, to the Storting): “The central aim of our foreign policy is to safeguard Norwegian interests. In development policy, the focus is on poor countries’ interests (...). An approach that includes an emphasis on common interests can further enhance understanding of and support for an active foreign and development policy, and can open up opportunities for new forms of cooperation. (...) However, the focus on safeguarding common interests and seeking to strengthen global public goods does not mean that the Government wishes to use development policy to further Norwegian economic interests or any other form of Norwegian self-interest. The objective of Norway’s development policy is to reduce poverty and to promote human rights.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands, Letter to the House of Representatives outlining development cooperation policy (2010): “The Netherlands has a direct interest in international stability and security, energy and resource security, a well-functioning international legal order and a level playing field, with all the necessary rules. Development cooperation is therefore an integral part of a broad foreign policy.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany, Coalition Agreement (2009): “In pursuing our objectives in development policy our values and interests are on par (...) Foreign trade and development co-operation must build upon each other and be integrated in a seamless fashion. Development policy decisions must take sufficient account of the interests of German economy, particularly the needs of small and medium-sized companies.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden, Global Challenges – Our Responsibility: Communication on Sweden’s policy for global development (2008): “The fight against poverty in its various forms not only remains the overriding goal of Swedish development cooperation but is also a central point of departure for the Government’s overall development policy. Although the primary responsibility for poverty reduction and development lies with the governments of the developing countries, Sweden can and will contribute to equitable and sustainable global development. We must do so out of a sense of solidarity and because we share a responsibility for the future of the world. Assuming that responsibility, moreover, is in our own interests.”</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Table 2 displays contrasting rationales used by donors to legitimate aid, with one side referring primarily to self-interests and the other to humanitarian motives. This division is in a way stylised since, as will be shown later, even in countries which emphasise the primacy of development in giving aid, other interests come into play. Yet, as Van der Veen (2011: 5) points out, the “frames” governments use to justify aid “shape the overall organization and quality of aid programmes” and “affect specific features, such as the total size of the aid
budget, or the geographical allocation of aid”.\textsuperscript{50} Donors who foreground self-interests are likely to select recipients for their strategic importance and to design programmes from which they potentially profit.

The crucial role of political and economic interests in giving aid is manifest in the case of South Africa. When the country turned into a democracy in 1994, a plethora of donors stood in a queue offering assistance although “by the usual criteria South Africa was too wealthy to qualify for much support” (Barber 2004: 149). Nevertheless, with USD 5 billion pledged from 1994 to 1999, donors offered “an enormous sum compared to other (more desperate) African countries” (Bond 2001: 25). The main rationale of the funders, with the European Union, the United States and Japan at the fore, was to re-build relations with the most powerful country and economic hub of the African continent. The new ‘rainbow nation’ became an attractive recipient, and “everybody wanted to be seen as ‘we are assisting South Africa to rebuild itself’” (Interview 22). The fact that the supporters presumed political rewards from their new partner became obvious in situations in which South Africa acted against their expectations. The Taiwanese government, for instance, faced such a conflict. Aiming at retaining South African official recognition of Taiwan instead of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), it presented itself as a generous friend to the ANC already prior to the first elections (Bond 2001). When in 1996, South Africa reversed its position by recognising the PRC, “the furious Taiwanese foreign minister John Chang suspended grants to South Africa worth [US]$ 80 million and loans worth [US]$ 50 million” (Bond 2001: 28).

While Taiwan failed to ‘buy’ South Africa’s solidarity with aid, the United States secured itself more influence. In 1997, President Clinton’s warning to withdraw all aid to South Africa as a reaction to the South African Cabinet’s approval of arms sales to Syria – viewed as a ‘terrorist state’ by the US – showed the desirable effect (Barber 2004: 104):

\begin{quote}
Although Mandela replied in March 1997 that it was immoral to abandon countries that had supported the ANC in the anti-apartheid fight ‘on the advice of countries that were friends of the apartheid regime’ (i.e. the US), Defence Minister Joe Modise confirmed that a marketing permit was issued for the arms but that, in the wake of the US warning, ‘We did not tender, as no documentation was received from Syria’. (Bond 2001: 29)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} Van der Veen (2011) uses the concept of ‘frames’ to classify ideas about goals and purposes of aid. Drawing on legislative debates from 1950 to 2000, he provides an in-depth analysis of frames and their impact on aid programmes in four European countries, namely Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands and Italy. His findings show how prevailing ideas shape aid policy and practices of donor countries.
There are plenty of similar incidents across the developing world where aid (or the suspension of aid) has been used to influence decisions related to both foreign and domestic politics in recipient countries. In recent years, donors threatened to cut aid to Uganda and Malawi as a reaction to the governments’ homophobic positions; subsequently, Malawi repealed its anti-gay law (BBC News 2012), and Uganda put its harsh Anti-Homosexuality Bill temporarily on hold (Ndinda 2010). In Rwanda, major development partners suspended aid in 2012 following accusations from a UN report that the country supported rebels fighting in the Eastern Congo (Rwamucyo 2012). At first glance, these examples prompt that by withdrawing aid, the international community sanctions human rights violations and external intervention. A second look, however, reveals that criteria seem different for different countries, dependent on their strategic importance for the donors. Despite evidence of severe human rights abuses and political oppression, the Ethiopian government receives around USD 3 billion in aid every year (Stickler & Barr 2011). The generous donations of its major funders, namely the US, the EU and the UK, can be explained by the fact that they see President Meles Zenawi as a stable partner at the Horn of Africa who supports their fight against terrorism (Hagmann 2012).

The significance of security interests in connection with aid has strongly increased with the ‘war on terror’ proclaimed by the Western world after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. While security issues have always been part of aid considerations, scholars argue that post 2001 they have taken precedence over poverty or human rights concerns (Woods 2005; Aning 2010). The “securitisation of development policy and practice (…) is manifest in aid rhetoric, policy discourse, institutional convergence and programming” (Howell & Lind 2009a: 1279; see also Howell & Lind 2009b). Articulating a causal linkage of poverty and terrorism, major donor governments have reframed the purposes and determinants of aid as an instrument serving security interests (Howell & Lind 2009a; Thede 2013). The Director-General of AusAid, Bruce Davis, expressed the paradigm shift in Australian aid as follows:

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51 Thede (2013: 795–796) provides an impressive list of major donors who reformulated their missions and priorities: “In 2002 the Canadian International Development Agency’s mandate was revised to include supporting ‘efforts to reduce threats to Canadian security’. In 2003 the Australian government cited poverty reduction as secondary to security considerations in its aid programme. In 2003 as well Japan modified its ODA charter, adding national security as a purpose of aid and including the prevention of terrorism as one of its principles. In 2004 Denmark added the fight against terrorism to the priorities of its aid programme, and has made aid allocations dependent on recipient country involvement in the ‘war’ on terror. In the USA the 2004 White Paper by USAID presents aid as an element of security strategies in the global war on terror. In addition, the EU has included cooperation in counter-terrorism by recipient countries as a prerequisite for EU development aid.”
It was not too long ago that aid and development lay firmly on the periphery of serious considerations of Australia’s security and strategic interests. Aid was often regarded as a somewhat ill-defined process of ‘doing-good’, a process which had little tangible impact on the strategic environment faced by Australia and its policy makers. These times are now over. (Davis in a speech on 27 October 2005, cited in Howell & Lind 2009a: 1283)

The new “security-first paradigm” (Aning 2010: 8) has not only brought about intensified collaboration and institutional tying of development and defence units, but has also affected the direction of funding flows, with ‘fragile states’ becoming prominent recipients (Howell & Lind 2009a). Various scholars have traced significant changes in aid allocations of Western donors, particularly the United States (Aning 2010; Fleck & Kilby 2010). Comparing USAID bilateral aid flows in the periods 1998–2001 and 2002–2005, Moss et al. (2005: 8) found that “Iraq and Afghanistan went from receiving virtually zero aid before the GWOT [Global War on Terror] to receiving two of the largest per capita allocations following 9/11. Jordan, already a major recipient, more than doubled its aid per capita from USAID”. While shifts in allocation patterns may be most obvious (and most frequently researched) in the case of the US, they are also found in a range of other donor countries (Howell & Lind 2009a). This suggests that the status of a country in the ‘war on terror’ has become a decisive variable for Western donors’ assistance decisions (Aning 2010).

Political influence and security, however, are not the only non-developmental objectives of aid. Economic interests are bluntly articulated by some donor governments and reflected in their aid agendas. In 2013, The Netherlands adopted a new policy titled ‘What the world deserves: A new agenda for aid, trade and investment’ which directly links aid and foreign trade (Government of the Netherlands 2013). In its coalition agreement of 2009, the liberal-conservative German government emphasised that “development policy decisions must take sufficient account of the interests of the German economy, particularly the needs of small and medium-sized companies” (CDU et al. 2009: 64).

Development cooperation is a conduit for business. Aid projects entail tenders for all kinds of goods and services, ranging from vehicles, medical drugs and equipment to construction and advisory services in various fields. Until a decade ago, it was common practice that such contracts were exclusively awarded to companies or service providers from the respective donor country. For recipients, such kind of conditionality not only took away any choice, but raised the price of aid products by 15% to 30% and had distorting effects on local markets (Jepma 1991; Browne 2006; Petermann 2013). In order to “reduce the high transaction costs” and “improve country ownership and
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alignment”, DAC member states committed themselves in the Paris Declaration to “make progress” on untying aid (OECD 2005: 5). Subsequently, the share of tied bilateral aid decreased from 54% in 1999–2001 to 24% in 2007 (Clay et al. 2009: viii). These data, however, are to be taken with caution. First, since donors voluntarily report the tying status of their aid to the OECD system, data are incomplete and inconsistent; second, they are skewed since two strongly tied types of aid are not covered, namely food aid and technical cooperation. In a country such as South Africa, which receives aid mainly in the form of technical assistance, the proportion of tied aid is hardly measurable due to a lack of donor information. Qualitative data, however, provide “evidence of de facto tying, with source country consultants or companies brought in to do work that could potentially be done domestically” (Ramkolowan & Stern 2011: x, italics in original; see also Fölscher et al. 2010).

The fact that donors continue to use aid to feed their own industries with contracts is corroborated by plain numbers: in 2012, USAID awarded only 4% of contracts to firms outside the United States (Piccio 2013); 18 of the top 20 private consultancy partners used from October 2010 to March 2011 were based in the US (Villarino 2011). Numbers for DFID are similar: The Guardian revealed that only 9 out of 117 major contracts and procurement agreements awarded in 2011/2012 were given to non-UK firms, with the large majority going to well-established British consultancy companies such as Adam Smith International or the Mott McDonald Group (Provost & Hughes 2012). Considering that UK aid has officially been untied since 2001, the on-going dominance of domestic firms is striking. The list could be continued with data from various other agencies which show that large amounts of aid flow back to the respective donor countries’ industries (for AusAid, see Parmanand 2013; for GIZ, see Buss et al. 2012). Various interviewees in our study broached the obvious relevance of business interests in development cooperation, with one stating:

*If you’re running a project and you want a project to get an extension, extended financial support, you have to ensure that there is provision for positions for foreign experts. Then you’re guaranteed of getting a continuation of that support. But I think it’s one way of job creation. Nothing else.* (Interview 69)

Apart from the direct gains derived from aid-related export of goods and services, aid brings along indirect benefits as it tends to trigger trade between donor and recipient countries also outside the field of development cooperation (Johansson & Pettersson 2005). The return of aid is thus potentially higher than the contract volume for donor companies arising out of aid activities.
A study which tried to measure both the direct and indirect effects of aid on export levels estimates that “aid is associated with an increase in exports of goods amounting to 133% of the aid” (Wagner 2003: 153), with exports of services not included. Economic gains have always been used to legitimate development assistance in the domestic political debate of donor countries. When in 1995, the Republican Party in the United States threatened to cut aid, Andrew Young as former US representative to the United Nations argued:

*We get a five to one return on investment in Africa, through our trade, investment, finance and aid. Don’t you see? We’re not aiding Africa by sending them aid, Africa’s aiding us.* (Andrew Young as cited in Bond 2001: 28)

Despite the significance of aid as foreign policy tool and door-opener for business, it would be superficial to lump donors all together and to deny that some give primacy to other, less selfish objectives. There are indeed countries which seem more guided by recipient needs than by political or economic interests, notably some Nordic states (Alesina & Dollar 2000). Sweden, for instance, has repeatedly been commended as a role model of the donor community with “development at the heart of its foreign policy” (OECD 2013a: 16), as an OECD report put it. In 2012, Sweden’s official development assistance amounted to almost 1% of its gross national income which exceeds the international target of 0.7% set by the UN. Allocating the major share of its aid flows to least developing countries, mostly in sub-Sahara Africa, the country adheres to its policy which emphasises poverty reduction as the primary goal of Swedish development cooperation (OECD 2013a). Yet, although Sweden underlines “solidarity with poor and vulnerable people in other countries” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2003: 18) as main rationale for support, it does factor in other interests. In its 2008 policy for Africa, the government outlines a comprehensive approach to development which integrates security, aid and trade issues, stating:

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52 Wagner (2003: 171) estimates “that 35 cents out of every dollar of aid comes directly back to the donor for exports of goods related to the aid-financed project and that another 98 cents finds its way back to the donor for exports of goods not directly linked to aid projects. These measurements exclude exports of services, which surely comprise a significant part of donors’ exports to recipients.”

53 The Swedish government is also increasingly pushed to consider non-developmental interests by domestic players which potentially gain from aid. In 2006, a consortium of Swedish exporters (including Volvo, Ericsson and Tetra Pak, amongst others) sent a letter to the minister for trade and industry in which they called for a closer involvement of the Swedish private sector in foreign aid, arguing that industry’s engagement would create “many qualified job prospects in Sweden” (Greenhill 2006: 34).
Economic ties in the form of trade and investment benefit African as well as Swedish commercial interests, a potential that should be exploited more extensively. The Government intends to collaborate with the private sector so as to protect and promote Swedish business relations with Africa. Closer political contacts, cooperation in the international arena and cultural exchange can be stimulated by and contribute to stronger and deeper economic relations. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2008b: 21)

Clearly, aid must be seen as a policy instrument which serves multiple interests at the same time, ranging from global development, poverty reduction and wealth creation to political influence, security and trade. While in every donor county, all of these interests to some extent play a role in giving aid, governments prioritise them in different orders. The ranking of priorities sets the agenda for those who deliver development assistance, namely the respective aid bureaucracies and organisations. In order to understand how these bodies operate, it is instructive to take a closer look at the organisational structures of bi- and multilateral aid providers.

Organisational structures of bi- and multilateral aid providers

Donor countries have established a range of different set-ups for development cooperation. Bilateral aid organisations vary particularly with regard to their affiliation with foreign affairs and their presence ‘in the field’ (OECD 2009a). Considering these features, we can broadly differentiate three organisational models.

In the first one, development cooperation units are directly affiliated with the ministry of foreign affairs or are even an integral part of it. Denmark, for instance, has fully shifted the responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring official development assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its representations abroad, namely the Danish embassies and missions, manage aid in the respective recipient countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2014).

While similar structures are also found in Norway, Finland and the Netherlands, other countries have institutionally separated development cooperation and foreign affairs. The United Kingdom, for instance, has established the Department for International Development (DFID) as a standalone authority independent from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Led by a secretary of state who is member of the cabinet, DFID has a very strong standing of its own and “enjoys an unambiguous relationship with other ministries, which allows it to influence cross government thinking on development policy” (OECD 2009a: 16). While DFID offices in recipient
countries are often housed in British embassies’ venues, they are not subordinate to them. Similarly autonomous are the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and, until 2013, the Australian Agency for International Development.54

Finally, there is a third model of managing aid adopted by a range of donor countries in which a superior authority is responsible for policy and decision-making, but a separate agency exists for the delivery of aid.55 In Germany, for instance, the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) commissions the German development agency GIZ to implement aid activities. As a federal enterprise, GIZ has its own offices in recipient countries and operates as the executing arm of the BMZ in the field. Likewise, USAID, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) function as implementing agencies for the governments of the United States, Sweden and Japan, respectively (OECD 2009a: 33).

In addition to bilateral channels, donors use multilateral organisations and global funding mechanisms for allocating aid which usually have a three-tier system comprising headquarters, regional and country offices. In the period 2001–2011, “multilateral ODA has risen from [USD] 27 billion to [USD] 38 billion, accounting for close to one-third of gross ODA” (OECD 2012a: 11). For donor governments, multilateral agencies offer economies of scale and scope, a global outreach, and the potential to influence the international agenda in the respective field of specialisation, amongst others (see Martens 2008). Also, intergovernmental bodies are usually regarded as “more objective aid-givers who tend to allocate aid according to need and the potential effectiveness of aid allocations” (Schneider & Tobin 2010: 2) rather than to individual donor priorities. In fact, by pooling their funds, governments to some extent lose control over their money as “key decisions on what, where and how it is actually delivered are taken at supranational level” (OECD 2011a: 9). The perceived neutrality of multilateral aid, however, is misleading. The fact that governments try to influence aid policies of the multilateral agency according to their own priorities is reflected in strategic documents. The US administration under President Obama, for instance, emphasised the importance of multilateral aid in two seminal documents in 2010, namely the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development and the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. While the former states that the US will “redouble our efforts to

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54 On 1 November 2013, AusAid ceased to exist as an independent agency when it was merged into the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; at the time of writing, the re-structuring process was still on-going (Australian Government 2013).

55 The superior authority can either be related to foreign affairs or be an independent development cooperation entity.
support, reform, and modernize multilateral development organizations most critical to our interests” (White House 2010), the latter outlines how such organisations should be used to foster the US agenda:

_Multilateral diplomacy is a specialized skill set that allows us to advance American interests across a wide range of multilateral organizations. We must expand the ranks of diplomats skilled in multilateral diplomacy and improve the links between our multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, especially with respect to our engagement with the United Nations. Multilateral diplomats must both maintain relationships with international organizations themselves and mobilize member-states to support our priorities in those organizations._ (Department of State & USAID 2010: 55)

The extent to which individual governments are able to foster strategic interests through multilateral organisations strongly depends on the allocation of power within the respective institutions. In United Nations agencies, the presence of countries in decision-making bodies is usually based on inclusion and rotation mechanisms established to ensure that the interests and needs of all member states are equally taken into account, irrespective of their political or financial strength.\(^56\) The World Bank as a multilateral financing institution, in contrast, has established a system in which countries’ economic performance and financial contribution to the Bank are determinants of decision-making authority (Stumm 2011).\(^57\) The majority of voting power lies in the hands of high-income countries, with the five main contributors alone holding 37% of all votes (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2013). The US as the largest shareholder with over 15% effectively has a veto on fundamental changes in the Bank. Consequently, the World Bank’s overall

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\(^{56}\) The World Health Organization, for instance, is governed by the World Health Assembly, the Executive Board and the Secretariat (World Health Organization 1946: 4). The Assembly as the supreme decision-making body is formed by delegates from all 194 member states. Taking into account an equitable geographical distribution, the Assembly elects 34 members entitled to designate a technically qualified person to serve on the Executive Board over a period of three years (World Health Organization 1946). In 2013, the Board was composed of seven delegates from the African continent, six from the Americas, three from South-East Asia, eight from Europe, five from the Eastern Mediterranean countries, and five from the Western Pacific region (World Health Organization 2013).

\(^{57}\) This applies to the allocation of the influential Executive Director positions and voting power: Five of the 25 Executive Director positions are given to the largest shareholders of the Bank – currently France, the United States, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development et al. 2013). All member states receive votes consisting of basic votes plus additional votes according to their share of the Bank’s capital stock held (World Bank 2012c), which leads to appalling power imbalances between developing and developed countries (Vestergaard 2011).
agenda is strongly driven by the strategic interests of the most powerful Western countries, while member states from the developing world have little say.

To what extent headquarters of bi- and multilateral organisations shape aid on the ground strongly depends on the decision-making autonomy of the respective agents in the field. The degree of authority delegated to staff in country offices varies considerably, both with regard to funding and programmatic issues. While some enjoy full financial authority over their country budget, others are not allowed to take any decisions on disbursements (OECD 2009b: 5–6). Similar differences exist when it comes to decision-making on priorities and modalities of support. DFID’s country offices, as well as the embassies of Norway and Denmark, for instance, enjoy a high degree of autonomy in terms of formulating country strategies, designing programmes and implementing activities. While the superior authority at the central level has the final say in approvals, country-based staff has a broad leeway to tailor cooperation to the demands of local counterparts. In Tanzania, the Dutch are well known for their responsiveness in this regard, as stated in an assessment of the Netherlands’ programme:

*In the health sector, the Tanzanian government appreciated Dutch flexibility to re-direct support to fill crucial gaps based on what was needed in Tanzania, rather than what was in vogue at home.* (OECD 2011d: 20–21)

The WHO adopts a similarly flexible approach. Although country strategies based on the global agenda and regional directions provide the broad framework for technical support, concrete activities are negotiated at the country-level between WHO staff and the local actors within the ministries and departments. 

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58 Donors differ widely with regard to the allocation of staff between headquarters and ‘the field’. The assumption that a higher share of staff in the field goes along with a higher degree of flexibility and responsiveness, however, does not hold true. The decisive factor in this regard is the degree of decision-making authority in the field, as elucidated above.

59 According to a study conducted by the OECD in 2009, nine of 19 DAC donors do not allow their field staff to make any financial commitments. In contrast, “DFID field offices can commit up to USD 15 million, and the Netherlands and Norway can delegate full commitment authority to the field within budget limits” (OECD 2009b: 5).

60 Globally, the WHO is guided by its “Eleventh General Programme of Work 2006–2015” (World Health Organization 2006) and the “Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2008–2013” (World Health Organization 2008). Further, there are regional policy documents, as, for example, the “Strategic directions for WHO 2010–2015” in the African region (World Health Organization 2010). Yet, WHO country strategies emphasise that technical assistance is solely provided upon the request of governments and fully guided by their respective priorities (World Health Organization 2009b; World Health Organization 2009c).
Contrary to these examples, there are organisations which maintain highly centralised decision-making structures. World Bank headquarters exert significant influence on the country assistance strategies that determine the Bank’s scope of support. Each single project has to be submitted to the Bank’s board of executive directors for consideration and approval (World Bank 2012b). Some bilateral donors, particularly those that use executing agencies, have similar centralised set-ups. USAID, for instance, is to a large extent driven by directives from Washington where the global agenda is set. Changes of priorities at the central level immediately affect activities on the ground. When the agency released its new education strategy ‘Opportunity through learning’ in 2011, country offices world-wide had to align the fit of their on-going activities with the new directive. With goal one being “improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015” (USAID 2011), “every USAID office around the globe has to show outcomes in readings” (Interview 42), an education specialist at USAID in Tanzania reported. Consequently, he had to justify before his superiors in Washington programmatic elements dealing with math and science which in light of the new strategy were perceived as “out of alignment” (Interview 42).

Categorising aid organisations by the extent of their decision-making autonomy at the country-level, we can differentiate two types: the first one with little autonomy functions as a service-provider implementing the directives of its superior authority. There is a clear-cut institutional separation between decision-making and the delivery of aid. The second type is more than just an executing arm of respective headquarters. It is the sub-agent of the donor country on the ground, responsible not only for implementing activities, but also authorised to take financial and programmatic decisions. Although the superior authority gives overall guidance, representatives in the field have a relatively broad room for manoeuvre in prioritising their support.

**Legitimating and organising aid: Donor typology**

We can draw the following conclusions from the above: first, bi- and multilateral aid is to a varying extent driven by strategic interests of donor governments which use different rationales for providing assistance. While some frame aid as an instrument to foster their own political and economic interests, others justify it as a humanitarian act and a matter of responsibility. Second, the extent to which the donor’s domestic agenda determines aid activities very

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61 As an example, the global strategy “PEPFAR Blueprint: Creating an AIDS-free generation” (United States of America, Department of State 2012) released by the US State Department on World AIDS Day 2012 became the guiding document for the US AIDS response world-wide and heavily influenced second-generation PEPFAR programmes at country-level.
much depends on the degree of authority delegated to the agents in the field (i.e. staff in country offices or embassies).

Both features, legitimation patterns and organisational structures, determine the extent to which aid is tied to a certain donor agenda or responsive to recipients’ priorities. Combining the two variables, four different types of donors emerge as displayed in Figure 3: Type I represents donors that subject aid to strategic self-interests and strongly direct the delivery of aid from a central level, making sure it adheres to the headquarters’ agenda. Type II donors set an agenda led by vested interests, but concede a high degree of decision-making autonomy to staff in the field which allows for greater responsiveness to counterpart demands. Type III donors delegate less authority to country offices and representations, but are led by the principle of placing recipient needs over self-interests. Type IV is the antipode to the first one: guided by solidarity as political rationale for aid, donors of this type refrain from (strongly) tying aid to self-interests and delegate the responsibility for aid mainly to the field.

**Figure 3: Donor typology based on aid rationales and decision-making structures**

![Donor typology diagram](image)

**Organisational interests of aid agencies**

Donor governments use different conduits for channelling aid, ranging from different types of bilateral agencies to multilateral organisations. While these bodies vary in terms of mandates, missions and structures, they share one decisive feature: their primary organisational goal is ‘moving money’ (Easterly 2002: 22; Gould 2005a: 150). The legitimacy of aid organisations is based on aid delivery. Given the difficulty in assessing the quality of delivered aid
in terms of actual change achieved in recipient countries, performance is measured against the volume of money disbursed. Although in recent years more emphasis has been put on observable outcomes of support (e.g. more children in schools), aid organisations still justify their work in terms of input, that is, money spent (Easterly 2002: 21): The World Bank on its country website for Tanzania mainly displays lending commitments and informs that “since 1995 the Bank has provided more than USD 6 billion to Tanzania in credits and grants” (World Bank 2013b). In the GIZ 2012 Annual Report, the state secretary of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in his function as chairman of the GIZ supervisory board declared that “GIZ made excellent progress by doing business worth over EUR 2 billion, and gaining an even firmer foothold on the international cooperation market for sustainable development” (GIZ 2013a: 5). The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presenting its performance against the strategic goal of tackling poverty and global inequality, noted that in 2012, “development assistance was increased by DKK 234 million and this amount will increase by a further DKK 366 million in 2013” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2013: 16).

The fact that aid providers “redefine inputs to development as outputs” (Easterly 2002: 21) yields the logic that the more they spend the better. This equally holds true for creditor institutions that work towards higher lending volumes, for aid agencies that aim at increasing business volumes and for bureaucracies that seek to expand their budgets. In the case of the latter, the disbursement imperative is exacerbated by the risk that “parliaments will react forcefully if approved allocations are not disbursed” (Gould & Ojanen 2005: 22), that is, cut the ministry’s budget.

The spending pressure pervading aid organisations has significant effects on the ground. First, it leads to donor-financed activities which lack any need on the recipient’s side, being solely organised for the sake of shifting money. A former GIZ programme manager told us:

*We had situations where (...) we received the directive to disburse around twelve thousand Euro within the next six weeks. Twelve thousand Euros are a hell of a lot of money to spend in a Tanzanian district. So what to do? I conduct a workshop as this is the fastest way to ditch money.*

(Interview 73, translated by authors)

62 The conception of the German aid agency GIZ as a company pursuing entrepreneurial goals has been underlined by GIZ staff interviewed, with one stating: “We are an enterprise and this has been pushed a lot in recent years, with our current chairman of the supervisory board being one of the drivers of this development. (...) GIZ is clearly drilled on business, we deliver by order.” (Interview 4, translated by authors)

63 For the budget-maximising goals of bureaucracies, see Niskanen (1971, repr. 2007).
Second, donor staff tend to refrain from withholding funds even if interventions fail to materialise or irregularities emerge. The organisational target to deliver what has been agreed tends to precede concerns about the usage of aid. An interviewee working at GIZ commented in this regard:

There were and there are cases of corruption in Tanzania where one wonders why certain donors did not suspend payments and instead just said, ‘we continue to transfer money.’ There you think there should be other interests on donor side. (Interview 72, translated by authors)

The “disbursement anxiety” dominating the donor community is not only related to “concerns of institutional survival” (Gould & Ojanen 2005: 22). It also drives donor staff at an individual level since professional careers depend on the volume of project or programme budgets and the timeliness of delivery (Gould 2005a: 139–140; Mummert 2013: 59). Thus, neither aid organisations nor their functionaries have an incentive to make themselves redundant by reducing aid flows and the need for assistance. If they succeeded in solving the problems of developing countries, their very existence would be at stake. The Kenyan economist James Shikwati, an outspoken opponent of foreign aid, thus states that “it is not in the interest of the aid industry to promote African homegrown solutions, because it feeds on the African problem” (Shikwati 2006: 4).

**The epistemic community of development experts**

The aid industry provides employment opportunities for a broad range of professionals, ranging from bureaucrats to drivers. Its core cadre, however, is formed by experts who sell their knowledge and act as brokers in the field of development cooperation. Operating on the ground, they serve as intermediaries between donor and recipient governments. Experts’ brokerage facilitates the transfer of monetary and non-monetary resources from one side to the other, putting them in a crucial middle position in the aid arena where they constitute a ‘strategic group’ with distinct interests (Bierschenk 1988; Evers 2005). In the triad of aid relations, this group takes on the role of the ‘tertius gaudens’ (Simmel 1950: 154 et seq.) that benefits from the opportunity to make profits and increase its own status, to accumulate power and expand

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64 We draw here on brokerage as a mechanism enabling disconnected groups to politically, economically or socially interact via a third party which helps resources (e.g. goods, money, information, opportunities) to flow across the gap. For details on the concept, see Stovel and Shaw (2012).
its scope of influence. In the following chapter, development experts are described as a transnational epistemic community with a particular stock of shared knowledge whose roles and activities help to explain their impact in recipient countries.

**Development experts: An epistemic community with knowledge as strategic resource**

The rise of the ‘knowledge for development paradigm’ brought about the emergence of a global network of professionals who have become increasingly powerful: development experts in various roles and positions whose dominance is based on their ascribed expert knowledge on ‘development’ and all fields supposedly related to it. Haas (1992) defines such a “network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” an “epistemic community”. Although members may come from different disciplines and backgrounds, they share a set of normative and causal beliefs, notions of validity and a common policy enterprise, “that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed” (Haas 1992: 3). Their authority to diffuse their specific truth is based on the superior status of their knowledge which is both claimed by themselves and acknowledged by a given society and its elite (Haas 1992: 17).

In the realm of aid, these features apply to the epistemic community of development experts. Consisting of professionals from a great variety of disciplines, its members share basic concepts and ideas that construct a reality in which goals and strategies increasingly converge (Evers 2005: 11). Their power to define ‘development’ and development problems, and their legitimacy in providing suitable solutions rests on the expert knowledge they claim to possess and the accepted authority of their expertise. This knowledge has five distinct characteristics: (1) a claim to authority borrowed from science; (2) a high degree of self-referentiality; (3) being permeated with economic and managerial knowledge; (4) a claim to universal applicability; and (5) the potential to transnationally diffuse a distinct set of norms and values.

**What makes an expert an expert: Qualification criteria and professional backgrounds**

In order to identify epistemic characteristics of development experts’ knowledge and the sources of their expertise, it is a useful starting point to look at formal

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65 The Millenium Development Goals proclaimed at the Millenium Summit in the year 2000 and agreed by 23 international organisations and 192 countries impressively illustrate the homogenisation tendency in the global development discourse.
CHAPTER 4 Multiple Actors, Colliding Interests: The Main Players of the Aid Game

qualification criteria and career backgrounds. They may indicate ‘what makes an expert an expert’.

Comparing eligibility criteria for advisory-related positions, the most obvious pattern is the requirement for an advanced university degree even at the lowest levels. To enter the so-called “Professional and Technical career path” at the World Bank, for instance, “advanced academic achievements and/or technical professional credentials such as Masters or PhD” (World Bank 2012d) are obligatory. In fact, a PhD is seen as essential for high-level advisory positions and promotion within the organisation (Dietrich 2006). In our sample, all interviewees working for an international organisation at least had a masters degree, one out of three a PhD.

A noticeable aspect related to the experts’ academic background is where they have received their professional training. Among the foreign experts (i.e. experts who are not South African or Tanzanian nationals), 89% have acquired their highest level of education either in North America (US or Canada) or in Europe, the remaining 11% in both a developing and a developed country. Among the South African or Tanzanian nationals working for a donor organisation, two out of three have earned a degree in the West; only one out of three received their education solely in South Africa or Tanzania. This supports the observation that the expert community in the development arena is dominated by graduates whose expertise is certified with academic credentials achieved at Anglo-American or European universities.66 In the case of the World Bank, many of them pass through the same schools, especially those of the US Ivy league and British elite universities such as the London School of Economics (Dietrich 2006: 33).67

The range of subjects studied by staff in international organisations is broad. In the sample interviewed, the majority is related to health sciences, educational sciences and natural/environmental sciences which corresponds to the policy fields of the study; the remainder can be categorised into economics and financial management, international relations/development studies and other social sciences. Many respondents specified more than one discipline. In many educational profiles, sector-specific studies were combined with additional training in public administration or development, for instance, “Sustainable Development and Environmental Studies, Public Financial Management,

66 Given that our study focused on traditional donors and did not include agencies from emerging donors such as Brazil or India, one may criticise that the results presented are geographically biased. However, as European, North American and multilateral agencies still are the dominant organisations in aid, we argue that our sample, which includes experts working for 13 different agencies, provides a valid basis for our conclusion.

67 In her study on World Bank careers, Dietrich (2006: 33) cites a staff member saying: “A colleague of mine told me that there are more than 70 different nationalities working for the Bank, but they all come from ten different graduate schools.”
International Studies”, “Public Health and International Development” or “Environment and Society and MBA”. The variety and the cross-disciplinary nature of educational backgrounds is a common pattern identified in the aid community which is the result of a shift towards multi-sectoral approaches and ‘cross-cutting’ issues (e.g. ‘good governance’) requiring “good team players who can work across sector boundaries”, as a World Bank report put it (World Bank 2005a: 34).

In all fields of development aid, management and administrative skills have increasingly gained importance. Several interviewees on both the recipient and donor side noticed a remarkable shift in employment practices in the sense that sector specialists in country offices have been replaced by administrators, accountants and economists. A South African government official responsible for international relations delineated this development as follows:

Now what you then have in the period 1995 to let’s just say 2000 if I had to mark it (…) is that foreign governments would place in development cooperation offices experts and people who had great interest in the transformation agenda in South Africa. And these were experts in their fields. Now what happens after that period is that you find administrators coming in, who have a very different interest and approach to development issues. So that’s I think a very critical issue. (Interview 21)

The changing composition of advisory cadres is closely related to the changing nature of advisory positions and responsibilities. A study on DFID’s use of advisors confirms this shift:

There has been a move towards promoting interdisciplinarity, cross-sector working, and therefore multi-sector posts. This trend can be seen in the emergence of ‘results advisers’, ‘poverty advisers’, MDG advisers etc. (…). As DFID has placed more emphasis on defining core competencies and on ensuring they align with corporate strategy this has led to a stronger emphasis on management skills and experience. (Mendizabal et al. 2012: x)

Aside from the shift related to educational backgrounds and the respective expertise of advisors, a second aspect of qualification is in flux, namely the scope and nature of development experts’ work experience. In this regard, the DFID study states that

whereas a decade ago DFID advisers had substantial professional background and experience, recruited mid-career and of an older age,
advisers are being recruited earlier in their careers with less experience, and are unable to offer advice with the same depth. (Mendizabal et al. 2012: 11)

Similarly, a World Bank report finds that in some regions,

the number of team leaders with less than three years experience in the Bank is relatively significant. For example, in the Africa Region the staff profile is becoming less experienced at a time when the operational challenges call for more experience, knowledge of what works and how to do it, and capability to help enhance country capacity. (World Bank 2005a: 37)

Many experts enter international organisations relatively soon after finishing their studies with little work experience in their profession outside the development domain. This tendency is supported by an increasing number of programmes for young professionals designed to bridge the time span between graduation and advisory positions, and provide a stepping stone for a straight-forward career in the aid community.68

International experience, preferably in the development world, is a crucial asset for this career. Once in the business, advisors accumulate assignments in a remarkable list of developing countries, staying at one place on average for two to four years.69 The professional profiles indicate a high degree of international mobility, with experts shifting from one developing country to the next or commuting between headquarters and the ‘field’.70 Interestingly, language skills and cultural knowledge seem to be of minor importance for the secondment to a host country. In our sample, 83% of the foreign experts

68 Examples are the Junior Professional Officer Programme of the United Nations agencies (UNDP 2013a), the World Bank’s Young Professional Programme (World Bank 2012I) or the Development Cooperation Trainee Programme offered by GIZ (GIZ 2013b). All of these programmes require a university degree at the masters level, around two years of practical experience (preferably in a developing country), and set the age limit for applicants between 30 and 32 years.

69 In our sample, 72% of the foreign experts indicated they would stay in South Africa and Tanzania, respectively, for 2 to 4 years (11% between 5 and 7 years, 16.6% permanently). Nationals working for development organisations, in contrast, show a different pattern in this regard: many have a permanent contract for working in the respective country office. In our sample, six out of seven ‘national’ experts who gave details about the duration of their stay are deployed on a permanent basis (answer “unlimited”).

70 The internal regulations with regard to rotation differ. While some organisations do not set strict rules, others apply specific rotation principles and limit the duration of stay in overseas offices to a certain time span after which staff has to go back to headquarters for a while. The justification for this practice mentioned in interviews is to ensure that experts keep up with headquarters’ policies and professional knowledge, and avoid ‘going native’ in the field.
did not have basic knowledge of Kiswahili or Afrikaans, respectively.\textsuperscript{71} Both in South Africa and Tanzania, the working language between advisors and their counterparts is English, the primary global language used within the expert community.

The brief glance at professional backgrounds and careers allows a first characterisation of the epistemic group of development experts: they share a common belief in ‘development’ and interest in providing knowledge-based concepts for the same. The formal criteria qualifying members for their professional activity is first of all technical knowledge acquired through high-level academic training. This specialised knowledge is combined with managerial skills and merged with practical experience gained primarily within the professional field of development cooperation.

\textit{Implications for the nature of development knowledge}

Based on these patterns, the knowledge shared by the epistemic community of development experts shows five distinct characteristics. First, development experts’ expertise derives its credibility from the reference to scientific knowledge and the adoption of scientific styles of presentation. Expert knowledge is certified by academic degrees usually acquired in developed countries of the North. Although aid experts are not part of the science community, nor do they (regularly) participate in the scientific discourse, the authority of their advice is to a significant extent based on the claimed scientific grounding; it is an authority borrowed from the truth claim of science.\textsuperscript{72}

Secondly, the expertise aid experts provide is neither based solely on scientific nor on professional knowledge outside the development domain. The working experience of advisors remains restricted, given the direct entry into the aid business. The generation of practical knowledge is thus primarily taking place within the realm of development cooperation. Consequently, a specific type of ‘development knowledge’ emerges that is highly self-referential.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} Among the foreign experts interviewed, only three had attended a language course before coming into the country. In general, preparatory training before going into the field does not seem to be standard: two out of three experts in the sample had not received any technical, cultural or language training courses prior to their arrival in the country. The fact that only a small number of organisations – in our sample Norway, Sweden, GIZ and USAID – provide preparatory courses is remarkable as one third of the interviewees in the study perceive cultural differences as problematic or even extremely problematic. More than half of the sample (54\%) assesses different styles of communication as a major obstacle for cooperation.

\textsuperscript{72} Text (studies, evaluations, reports etc.) produced in the context of development cooperation resembles scientific publications in terms of formal characteristics such as the style of writing and referencing.

\textsuperscript{73} The self-referential nature of development knowledge is displayed in texts produced in the context of development projects, which primarily refer to publications produced within the aid community.
Thirdly, while the stock of knowledge on development comprises a variety of specialist knowledge, it is increasingly permeated with economics and managerial thinking. This is evidenced by a rising demand for specialised economists (such as health or environmental economists) and an increasing number of generalists and administrators filling expert positions. The changing composition of expertise impacts on advisory processes insofar as it leads to a primacy of procedural and finance-related aspects within cooperation (see also Chapter 5).

Fourthly, the mobility of experts and the establishment of global knowledge networks suggest that the epistemic community regards its specific development knowledge as locally unbound and transferable. The practice of adopting and testing ideas and concepts in different countries around the globe implies a validity claim of universal application (Evers et al. 2009).

Such a claim ignores the contextual nature of knowledge (i.e. that knowledge is infused with norms and values). As Haas (1992: 4) points out, an epistemic community’s advice “is informed by its own broader worldview”. In the aid context, expert knowledge transmits a distinct perspective on development and democratic governance as constructed by the donor community. The potential to transnationally diffuse norms and values affiliated with these concepts is the fifth significant characteristic of the knowledge promulgated by the epistemic community of development experts. As will be shown in the pursuant case studies, the specific nature of development knowledge has distinct implications for advisory processes and the impact of expertise.

Representatives, advisors, and consultants: Typology of experts in the field

While sharing a transnational epistemic culture and using knowledge as a ‘strategic resource’ (Evers et al. 1988; Evers 2005), development experts take on different roles and operate at various levels in recipient countries. The positions they hold differ in terms of employment conditions, authority and functions, particularly with regard to the linkage of administrative, programmatic and advisory responsibilities. Taking these aspects into account, one can broadly differentiate three types of experts in the field: representatives, advisors and (short-term) consultants.

With job titles ranging from senior policy advisor, programme director or counsellor to first secretary for a specific sector, experts which we categorise as representatives are assigned to fulfil a combination of administrative, programmatic and advisory functions, and are usually deployed for a period

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74 For the context specificity and constructiveness of knowledge, see Berger and Luckmann (1966); Knorr-Cetina (1981); Knorr-Cetina (1984).
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of three to four years. Placed in the country office of an organisation or in the embassy of a donor country, they administrate a sector portfolio or programme, being responsible for both overseeing funding flows and progress. Acting as official representatives of their organisation, they also participate in high-level meetings in which priorities and scope of support are negotiated. At the same time, they are regularly engaged in policy discussions and closely interact with senior government officials and policy-makers. An exemplary job description of UNDP for the position of a “Programme Specialist Energy and Climate Change” in Tanzania illustrates the broad range of responsibilities, listing 36 points of duties which comprise “substantive support to national counterparts in policy planning and advocacy”, “participation and leadership in the joint identification of programmatic and policy issues to be addressed and formulation of joint programme strategies” and “oversight of planning, budgeting, implementing and monitoring of designated UNDP projects, and monitoring the use of financial resources in accordance with UNDP rules and regulations” (UNDP 2012).

Experts in such a multifunctional position are not necessarily sector specialists in the sense that they have a training background in the field they are concerned with. For the UNDP job above, the educational requirement was a masters degree or higher in the field of science, engineering, economics, development or a related field. A DFID education advisor in our sample was trained in geographic information science. A CIDA education team leader with a background in international affairs and development studies explained:

*I’m a generalist, basically, and that’s fairly typical for who CIDA puts in positions like mine. (…) Our expertise is more in how to work with governments, and how to work with our headquarters, and how to get projects approved, and through the process and so on, and then how to manage resources as needed.* (Interview 30)

The tendency to employ generalists instead of specialists is supported by the increasing number of hybrid posts covering more than one sector. DFID in Tanzania, for example, in 2004 had established an advisory position responsible for education, water and health (Mendizabal et al. 2012).75 As will be discussed later (see Chapter 5), the move away from sector specialists has significant implications for advisory processes as it changes the expertise provided in policy discussions.

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75 While the establishment of a hybrid advisor reduced staff costs in the Tanzanian country office, it also led to a decreased influence of DFID, particularly in health. An evaluation concluded that hybrid advisors are not suited to influence policies in multiple sectors simultaneously, with advisors struggling to provide substantial input at a technical level (Mendizabal et al. 2012).
CHAPTER 4 Multiple Actors, Colliding Interests: The Main Players of the Aid Game

Compared to representatives, the work of the second type of experts categorised here as *advisors* is less concerned with representational and administrative tasks and more focused on providing technical expertise. Advisors are usually trained as specialists in the area they are involved in and deployed to assist in a specific process over a period of on average one to four years. They are often physically placed in the government ministry or department in order to closely interact with their counterparts who are usually senior government officials in the highest ranks of the technical cadre. A typical example is the Health Policy, Planning and Management Advisor of Danida’s health sector support (2009–2014) who was embedded in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in Tanzania and supposed to closely liaise with the director of policy and planning and the chief medical officer (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark & Government of Tanzania 2009). Similarly, DFID seconded a senior health advisor to the South African Department of Health who in the context of a comprehensive programme directly advised the director-general on on-going reform processes (DFID South Africa 2013). Advisors thus operate within the inner circle of governments. Their deployment is justified in terms of ‘capacity gaps’ in recipient authorities which they are expected to fill and at the same time to transfer knowledge and skills to their counterparts.\(^7\)

The third type of expert is the consultant hired by development organisations and/or recipient institutions for the delivery of expertise in the form of specific products, such as appraisal and feasibility studies, mid-term and final evaluations, expenditure tracking surveys, guidelines, etc. The time frame for short-term consultancies is usually far less than a year, on average ranging from a few weeks to six months. In many cases consultancies are solely based on the analysis of records and written documents. The interaction with ministerial staff is mostly limited to gaining information and access to data sources from the local institution. To what extent recipients take up reports and recommendations is out of the consultant’s responsibility and control, as a Finnish specialist acknowledged:

*Doing consultancy is much like you do short term things and then you write a report and even if you manage to communicate very well about it to the people with whom you’ve worked, then you don’t know if something is done, if your recommendations are really being implemented or what happens after that.* (Interview 36)

In aid-receiving countries donor experts of all three types “work in a routinised fashion at the centre of policy making” (Harrison 2004: 90). Comparing their potential influence, the short-term consultant is at the lower end. Several

\(^{7}\) The intricacies of this task will be discussed in Chapter 5.
interviewees assessed the impact of consultancies as marginal. As a GIZ advisor in South Africa put it:

Arriving as a short-term consultant, you hand in your analysis, here is the report, these are the recommendations. They say, ‘Yes, thank you’ – and put it in the shelf. (Interview 4, translated by authors)

The other two types of experts, in contrast, have a broader scope of impact. Advisors seconded to counterpart ministries interact with senior officials on a daily basis, operating at the highest technical level of government. Representatives may less directly take a hand in particular issues, but instead shape the strategic direction of sector discussions. Investigating the impact of external experts in South Africa and Tanzania, it is thus crucial to consider their different roles and levels of influence in the realm of policy-making.

Advisory activities of development experts

The omnipresence of development experts in the respective government agencies of aid-receiving countries provokes a simple question: what do these experts actually do, that is, what kind of support do they provide? The common answer given to this question, namely providing technical assistance or advice, is rather vague. In the donor community, the term is used as a placeholder for a variety of advisory activities which address different elements of policy-making and governance. Table 3 displays a categorisation of advice provided in the South African and Tanzanian ministries and departments included in this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advisory activity</th>
<th>Type of support</th>
<th>Impact level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical advice</td>
<td>Provision of technical expertise</td>
<td>Content of policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of international experience</td>
<td>Bringing in experience and evidence from other countries</td>
<td>Content of policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process facilitation</td>
<td>Facilitating dialogue and supporting the policy process</td>
<td>Policy processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial advice</td>
<td>Introduction and transfer of managerial methodologies</td>
<td>Governance practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational development</td>
<td>Assistance in setting up or restructuring government bodies</td>
<td>Governance systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on empirical material.77

Table 3 only includes expert activities related to advice; it does not comprise administrative tasks or programmatic responsibilities.
In Table 3 technical advice is defined in a narrow sense as the provision of expertise for problems which require specialist knowledge. Experts in our sample, for instance, prepared guidelines for the initiation of antiretroviral treatment on HIV patients, analysed data for environmental resource assessments or provided input in the process of revising policies, in some cases even drafted the final policy document.

Less directly, experts shape policy content by providing international experience, namely, presenting approaches adopted in other countries for similar problems. A South African government official described the advisory service of an expert seconded to his department in the following way:

*He [the advisor] will go out and research what is it that we are trying to do and find out very good learning experiences from other places (...). So he would be able to say, ‘Look, I know this what you are trying but in this other places, this is how they approach this issue and it seems as if you have got these options, these are consequences.’ And where he could not come up with a clear recommendation, he will phone other people that he was working with to search for the solutions that were used in their countries and what were some of the problems.* (Interview 22)

Here, the strategic resource experts draw on is less specialised knowledge, but rather their access to a global network in which experiences are stored and shared. This network also enables them to source internal and external expertise which governments are struggling to obtain. The mobilisation of knowledge is a typical activity classified under the broader rubric of ‘facilitation’ or ‘catalytic work’. While in Tanzania, a large proportion of advice is still focused on the provision of technical expertise, many experts in South Africa saw themselves as facilitators rather than as knowledge providers. A typical response in this regard was given by an advisor placed in the South African Department of Health who stated:

*A lot of the work that we’re doing is like facilitating groups, getting together, making sure due process is adhered to so if you’re going to do a consultation, make sure all the right groups are there, it’s that sort of thing. More facilitation and doing catalytic work, not so much the technical content of policies because that on the whole is here, that’s not where the gap is.* (Interview 1)

In practice, this means that advisors support the policy process by setting up meetings, preparing agendas, distributing information, drafting the minutes and monitoring follow-up actions. While this may seem as standard
bureaucratic work, it does affect policy processes in a significant way. By providing administrative assistance, experts impact the pace, procedures and priorities of policy negotiations. As brokers between stakeholder groups, they also to some extent influence who is given a voice in the dialogue. Finding civil society members or representatives of the private sector in policy discussions is often the result of donor persuasion. As a World Bank expert in Tanzania put it:

* A significant portion on the Bank’s value added is that you force all these people in a room together to talk about things, you know. They would say we’re a ‘convening power’. (Interview 46)

This ‘convening power’ becomes manifest in meetings and events which are not likely to take place without external facilitation. A study tour on climate change financed and organised by the World Bank in the year 2012 serves as a case in point in this regard. In cooperation with DFID and the UNDP, the Bank brought a range of high-ranking Tanzanian government officials and civil society actors to Namibia for a week of workshops and discussions with ‘knowledge providers’ from Mexico, South Africa, Zambia and the host country. The aim of this ‘Learning Week’, as the World Bank termed it, “was for Tanzanian decision makers and advocates to learn from successful approaches to climate change planning in different economic and regional contexts and apply these lessons to their own context” (World Bank 2012g). The impact of this sort of facilitating work is hard to measure directly. Yet, through organising discourse behind the scenes, experts are able to push certain topics (such as climate change in the example above), to channel who is doing the talk and to accelerate the pace of policy-making concerning the respective matter.

A direct impact of expert engagement which is more easily observable concerns the practice of governance: managerial advice to recipient bureaucracies has fundamentally changed their ways of working. Since the rise of new public management, experts have introduced “new methodologies of governance based on corporate plans, surveys and closer budgeting/monitoring techniques” (Harrison 2004: 90). Asked what kind of expertise World Bank and UNDP experts provided to his organisation in the context of a joint environmental project, a South African official explained:

* I think they did bring with them a lot of project management skills which was useful, also evaluation mechanisms, you know, to evaluate your effectivity on the ground, your project effectivity, your cost effectivity, and so on. I think what also came out of this process very nicely was [that] it gives you the opportunity to stand back and evaluate objectively what
you’re doing and why you are doing it, to question on a regular basis that what you do is in fact aimed at a proper goal and a proper objective. (Interview 13)

The adoption of project management tools and evaluation mechanisms has far-reaching implications for government ministries and departments. It not only changes the language and format of their policies and plans which now commonly entail ‘strategic objectives’ and ‘logframe tables’, but also basic principles (‘efficiency and effectiveness’) and practices of governance.

The last type of support in this categorisation of advisory activities is organisational development. Our study provides various examples in which external experts assisted in restructuring government bodies (e.g. the South African National AIDS Council) or establishing new units or offices (e.g. the South African Office of Health Standards Compliance), and thus engaged in shaping governance systems of aid-receiving countries.

Addressing policy content and processes, as well as governance systems and practice, development experts deal with core issues of democratic governance. As Gould (2005b: 9) observes, they interact with a “growing assertiveness” in the political arena of recipient countries. Given their intimate involvement therein, it is striking that experts tend to dissociate themselves from the political processes in their host countries (Gould & Ojanen 2003). 78 Reflecting on their professional role, several experts in our sample rejected any political influence. 79 Similar to others, a GIZ advisor said:

Whether I adopt a health financing system based on a social insurance model as we have in Germany, or a private one as in the US, or the NHS [National Health Service] in the UK, is a political decision. These decisions are made and must then be implemented by technical experts. We do not take part in political decision-making, we advise and recommend, but the decisions have to be taken at a different level. (Interview 4, translated by authors)

Only two senior experts, one of them retired, explicitly acknowledged having shaped political decisions in their host countries to a significant extent. The majority of donor representatives interviewed rather downplayed their role in

78 Gould and Ojanen (2003: 15) observed the “dissociation from political processes” as a “defining characteristic” of the transnational expert elite, with donors “commonly avoid[ing] the appearance of engaging in ‘politics’”.

79 Interestingly, when asked for an assessment of their organisation’s impact on policy processes in South Africa and Tanzania, almost two out of three donor interviewees (65.4%) in our sample ranked their organisation as being “amongst the most influential key players” (7.7% “most influential key player”; 23.1% “middle-range impact”; 3.8% “low impact”).
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policy-making. Framing advice as a technocratic exercise, however, not only disguises the impact of external experts on policy-making and governance in young democracies; it also makes it impossible to hold them to account for consequences of their advice, despite their considerable discursive power in the political realm.

Summing up this chapter on actors and interests in aid, it has become clear that development assistance is used as a strategic tool by all players involved. While donor governments aim at maintaining geopolitical influence, as well as fostering export and trade, recipient governments seek to increase their budgets and thus their capacity to act, but also to strengthen relations with partners on their diplomatic priority list. Hence, aid is an instrument of foreign and domestic politics on both sides, albeit used from different angles.

Looking at the level of organisations, the logic ‘the more aid, the better’ equally applies to bureaucracies that receive and to those which deliver it. Underfinanced ministries and departments in developing countries are usually keen to access as much additional funding as possible which often results in struggles between treasuries, line ministries and authorities at lower levels competing for donor money. As ‘moving money’ is the primary objective and source of legitimacy of aid bureaucracies, they share their partners’ interest in high spending volumes and on-going disbursements. Continued need for external support legitimates their existence.

This also holds true for the individual employees of aid organisations who have tangible incentives to ‘keep aid rolling’ since their careers depend on it. Development cooperation has created a profitable market for professionals from various branches who are attracted by material and non-material rewards: with salaries matching donor countries’ pay scales, aid experts commonly enjoy a relatively high living standard in their host countries. Their (ascribed) expert knowledge grants them access to the highest government levels. Naturally, individuals work towards keeping that status. New aid projects and programmes, however, not only advance the careers of donor staff. They also promise benefits for officials in recipient institutions who can personally profit from extra payments commonly connected with donor-funded activities.

In this summary, we paint a very ‘selfish’ picture of the agents involved in development cooperation. That calls for a qualification: it is not to be doubted that there are good intentions in aid, that is, that donor governments provide assistance out of a political culture which emphasises solidarity; that recipient institutions secure aid in order to fix health systems or improve education etc.; or that experts and government officials cooperate in aid projects with the goal of making a change for the people. The purpose of this chapter, however, was to shed light on the web of interrelated interests playing a role in development cooperation. The fact that aid is driven by actors with multiple motives and
agendas which sometimes correlate, but often collide, provides a complicated setting for advisory processes. The intricacies of expert advice that result from the linkage of aid and politics and other structural flaws in the context of aid are spelled out in more detail in the following chapter.