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Abstract:
In spite of the vivid literature on the practices and economics of foreign aid, international relations theory fails to provide the theoretical/conceptual tools which would allow states to cooperate with other states (bi- or multilaterally) on internal issues. Therefore such practices as foreign aid, or more specifically conditionality, policy recommendations, technical assistance, remain in the 'grey' area of international affairs being close to unacceptable or even illegal. The article makes the case for the relevance of IR theory in better understanding development aid and builds up an initial theoretical framework which can facilitate the analysis of foreign aid practices/regime.

From an international relations theory (IRT) perspective foreign aid remains as Morgenthau notes as early as 1962: "Of the seeming and real innovations which the modern age has introduced into the practice of foreign policy, none has proven more baffling to both understanding and action than foreign aid." (p. 301) In spite of the vivid literature on practice-related and economic aspects of foreign aid, IRT fails to provide the theoretical/conceptual tools which would allow states to cooperate with other states (bi- or multilaterally) on internal issues. Therefore such practices as foreign aid, or more specifically conditionality, policy recommendations, technical assistance, remain in the 'grey' area of international affairs being close to unacceptable or even illegal— understood as breeches of sovereignty.

Moore and Robinson (1995) point out to what I see as the major obstacle to the success of the foreign aid regime – "political conditionality is a blatant violation of the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations" (p. 285). This obstacle can be translated in two related problems. The first problem refers to the interpretation of the inter-state

relations, which in the current state of affairs cannot provide the needed support for aid to produce real results. And the second problem refers to the mainstream understanding of 'doing development' (or 'disbursing aid') which produces, up to date, unsatisfactory results.

With regard to 'working on internal issues', as Evans (1996,p.1130) notes, we also lack a clear "understanding of the nature of synergistic relations between state and society and the conditions under which such relations can most easily be constructed". This means that we lack both the conceptualization of 'sovereignty' which would allow states to cooperate in a meaningful way for 'doing development' and the connection between third state(*s*) and the internal society of any recipient state.

In spite of Black *et al.*'s (1996,p.281) opinion that "the trend towards standardized aid policies reflects the deepening of structures and processes of global governance", the global governance does not appear to have evolved sufficiently as to allow sustainable development to occur. The international institutional framework and the conceptualization of inter-state relations cannot overpass as well the obstacle pointed to by Chenery and Strout (1996, p.726), that "it is very unlikely that any such country [in typical Asian or African conditions] can meet all the requirements of skill formation, institution building, investment allocation, etc. in less than one generation". New concepts, new understanding of old concepts and new practices are needed to allow states to become so intimately related as to develop generation-long projects/realities.

In the light of the above, what appears puzzling from an international relations theory perspective is the institution of aid itself, especially 1. the problems posed by the half a century developments in the aid industry (i.e. the current practices of aid disbursement and additional policies—conditionality, selectivity, technical assistance) to the core conceptualizations of a world order based on sovereign states, 2. in the light of the struggles of international community to make development happen for real, the failure of international relations theory to offer the conceptual tools needed for successful inter-state/IGO-state cooperation

on issues of development, and 3. the incapacity of international relations theory to offer a conceptualization of world order where not only that dialogue among developed and developing countries exists, but where different forms of life/lifeworlds can meaningfully relate with each other.

Given the above puzzle two aspects will receive further attention in this article (work in progress). First, making the case for the importance of an IR perspective on aid and second, presenting an initial conceptualization of aid on IR theory grounds with the aim of understanding its role in the Western-inspired post-1945 world order?

In order to address these questions, I will turn to Ikenberry's discussion of world order building in the aftermath of major wars complemented by Mouffe's conceptualization of 'agonistic democracy,' to Risse's conceptualization of a mode of international interaction characterized by a 'logic of arguing' and to a reinterpretation of international regimes. I will proceed in the following way. First, I will present in a more detailed manner how sovereignty and 'doing development' represent obstacles to a successful developmental process. Second, I will develop a framework which will allow the analysis of aid practices/regime with the aim of providing useful insights about the transformation of the world order after the Second World War.

Substantiating the puzzle

In this section I will expand on the puzzles raised above by addressing the international relations theory-related aspects which in my view impact negatively foreign aid and more exactly development. I argue these obstacles are the core conception of 'sovereignty' and the western donors' understanding of 'doing development.'

On Sovereignty and international cooperation

> In sum, weak states have a deeply troubled relationship to the international order, and in particular to the institution of sovereignty. … That awkward situation must necessarily crate a tension in the international order. … The system has not been a dramatic success; weak states have not, in numbers, achieved

sustained socio-economic development. … Sovereignty is built on the assumption that the states who have it can basically take care of themselves. Weak states fail to meet that condition; that is the core problem leading to instability in the international order. And there is no comfort to be found in the promise that aid will eventually lead to development because we do not know if that is the case (Sørensen 2004: 119-120).

Why is sovereignty important? Why is it an obstacle?
Sovereignty represents an agreed upon right of states to be considered constitutionally independent, retaining the right to decide on all internal and external matters of the state and the obligation to respect the sovereignty of the other states. Jackson (1990, p.35 in Sørensen, 2004, p.105) comes up with several rules of the sovereignty game: "among them 'non-intervention, making and honouring of treaties, diplomacy conducted in accordance with the accepted practices, and in the broadest sense a framework of international law…the rules include every convention and practice of international life which moderate and indeed civilize the relations of states'".

For the purpose of my argument I will focus on non-intervention and reciprocity. Non-intervention holds that "states have a right to choose their own path, to conduct their affairs without outside interference. States are free to decide what they want to do without meddling from others" (Sørensen 2004, p. 105). The problematic aspect here is that such an understanding of a right entails as well the responsibility of states to secure their own security and welfare, which in the case of the developing states is questionable. In what regards reciprocity it "means giving and taking for mutual advantage. States make deals with each other as equal partners; no one is entitled to specific benefits; there is no preferential treatment or positive discrimination" (Sørensen 2004, p. 105).

In spite of the formal interpretation of sovereignty, "in *substantial* terms, states are hugely *unequal;* some states have gigantic capacities for action and control while others are almost completely powerless" (Sørensen,2004,p.106). This situations makes necessary the apparition of the political element, as Keohane (1995 in Sørensen 2004, p.111) notes,

"states bargain with their sovereignty… so that they allow other states to influence the regulation of their domestic affairs in return for influence on the domestic affairs of these other countries". This is already a sign that sovereignty is in a process of transformation, so that 'states can no longer be sovereign in the traditional sense of the word' (Scholte 2000: 136)" (Sørensen 2004, p. 107). Scholars are looking into the causes and effects of such transformation but most of the discussions refer to ontology. This makes us wonder whether the theories we stick to are still valid, exactly what I am claiming here, as well. Therefore, as several scholars have pointed out (Soroos 1986, Wriston 1992, Scholte 2000, Sørensen 2004) more emphasis needs to be put on conceptualizing how such a system of states with a 'transformed' notion of sovereignty would look like and, in the context of this paper, which would be the implications for the practices of foreign aid.

Looking at how sovereignty gets to be shaped in the donor—recipient relationship, donors seem to have a double impact on the recipient states. The existence of the economic aid represents in itself a violation of the reciprocity principle and as well the fact that donors' policies guide development projects represents at least an indirect violation of the non-intervention principle. These violations are not complete however, since "states cannot merely do what they want in the weak, least developed states. Interventions in other sovereign states cannot be conducted in complete ignorance of the rules of international society, so such acts of intervention need to be justified" (Sørensen 2004, pp. 116-7). As well the principle of sovereignty is often invoked by the rulers/leaders of developing states and as such bargaining becomes an important tool of adjusting interests. Rulers of the "weak, least developed states most strongly support the institution of sovereignty and the inviolability of borders; they embrace 'the dominant values of the Westphalian system' (Ayoob 1995: 3) to an exceptional degree. In formal terms, sovereignty leaves supreme legitimate power in domestic affairs to the government" (Sørensen 2004, pp.116-7). Table 4-a. presents the special sovereignty game as developed by Sørensen (2004, p.119), revealing the connection between developing states and the institution of sovereignty:

Table 1: The weak, least developed states: a special sovereignty game, from (Sørensen 2004: 119)

	Weak States
1. Core of sovereignty	Constitutional independence
2. Regulative rules	'Negotiated intervention' (donor control of aid, supervision by international society). 'Non-reciprocity' (special treatment of weak states because they cannot reciprocate).
3. Substance of statehood	Weak and ineffective institutions. No national community. No national economy.

On the background of a conceptual orthodoxy, practice seems to present a rather different reality for decades now (in what regards the practice of foreign aid). It appears evident from Sørensen's above game that sovereignty-in-use is different from the cannons of the IR literature. As such IR theory is not a favorable framework which would allow developed and developing states to work together on the internal problems of the developing states. Some proposal for alternative conceptualization exists, like fore example the EU-inspired multilevel governance. "The whole idea of multilevel governance is based on the creation of formal and informal channels for *legitimate outside intervention* by the EU in the affairs of member states" (Sørensen 2004, p.114).

On the grounds of foreign aid, the hardest challenge any new theoretization of sovereignty faces is to combine ownership with conditionality; in IR terms, to combine the respect for the current principle of non-intervention with granting developed states the right to take up responsibility and therefore act, for example, for the alleviation of poverty. This may not prove easy since "the changes diagnosed here concern the actual substance of statehood" (Sørensen 2004, p. 107) which as Ruggie (quoting Tilly in 1998, p. 191 in Sørensen 2004, p. 109) notes "once the system of modern states was consolidated […] the process of fundamental transformation ceased: "[states] have all remained recognizably of the same species up to our times"".

'Doing Development' and Foreign Aid
As Pearson noted in the report of 1969 (in Cassen and associates 1994, p .203) the effectiveness of aid is not related solely to procedures and techniques, Pearson considers more important the 'overall organization of purpose'. The second problem I raise can be integrated in this line of thought. The way 'doing development' is conceptualized cannot support practices and policies which would lead to sustainable development.

Of course this problem is related to the previous one in that if states cannot conceptually work together on internal issues (due to breaches of sovereignty), then thinking on how such work might become efficient in reality is logically impossible. Reality contradicts us as aid is a fairly wide-spread practice; however what I argue is that the theoretical constraints have an impact on the efficiency of such practices. The current institutions cannot transcend the existent conceptual limitations and this is evident in the results they get: "Yet aid has not been adequate to the challenges of world poverty. The facts of human hunger and misery, as well as the need to establish a cooperative world, make it imperative to see the need for a more substantial effort, even while recognizing past positive achievements" (Lumsdaine 1993, p. 285). If the aid community is to be successful in its attempts, it should pay more attention to the limitations of the foundational assumptions of their work. The conceiving of institutions *for* 'doing development' is in itself problematic. Development cannot become sustainable unless the aim of these institutions is shifted to managing development (Cibian 2006, Cibian 2008).

Why is the current understanding of 'doing development' problematic? I will develop two arguments in what follows. First, I will refer of the concept of 'development' in the Western thinking and second I will continue with arguing that donors run away from assuming the responsibility of making development happen.

Riddell (1996 p. 195) asks us to think whether "the type of development being promoted and urged on developing countries is able to achieve the ends of poverty reduction". This is an important issue. If we are

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talking about 'doing development' we should know what kind of development we are talking about. Pretes (1997 p. 1424) helps us by clarifying the significance of 'development' for the Western culture and its relationship with non-Western cultures.

In sum, development, in its Western sense, is an established process central to the Western worldview (cf. Banuri, 199a, p. 66). Development has no end; it is infinite and continua – in practice this involves the control over transformation of nature to serve human ends – and its ultimate justification is that Western civilization has defined it as its principal goal, as its prime symbol or imaginary social signification. The Western understanding of development is distinctly Western and not shared by non-Western cultures; it is a cultural product and one that is not fixed or given, but subject to potential redefinition. Such a redefinition would involve changing the fundamental questions and beliefs of Western society, in which case it would no longer be Western society.

Problems evidently arise from the above. However it is clear by now that we are talking abut a Western understanding of development. Since aid is given by the West, it would be almost impossible to imagine that Westerners are going to promote non-Western understandings of development in developing countries (as long as they maintain the decision-making power over development strategies and projects). As we easily can realize, this cultural gap between Western donors and non-Western recipients is indeed a problem, and unfortunately one which will stay with us for a considerable period of time. For the purpose of this paper, I will not address this issue in more detail, since the aspects I want to underline are that development is understood as continuous in the West and that it might be subject to a plurality of understandings (Cibian 2006, 2008).

Moving into more practical aspects of foreign aid, I will claim that a second major deficiency of the current understanding of 'doing development' is donors' fear/incapacity of assuming responsibility. Donors take a very easy way out. The 'trying to help' that they provide, is very sequential and easily disrupted by a variety of factors. At first

sight it may appear as a structural deficiency, however, such a structural deficiency has conceptual basis (Cibian 2008).

The fragmentation of the donor community is a case of concern, dozens of independent and non-cooperating donor agencies, hundreds of NGOs, thousands of more specific or more general projects/programs make the development site within any developing country a rather complicated reality—little likely to offer hopes for coherent outcomes. The different deals agreed upon with each of the recipient governments by the many donors, the concept itself of intervening through projects or through programs reveal a fear/incapacity of assuming responsibility on the side of the donors. Even if these aspects could be understood as legitimate in the light of the international constraints (sovereignty), we can easily see from practice that it does not lead to expected success.

In spite of the correlations many authors make between the welfare options of one state and its involvement in development (Lumsdaine 1993, Noël and Thérien 1995, etc), once we take the argument a step further and have a look at how states deal internally with social policy compared to how they deal with foreign aid policy in developing countries, we can easily note that we are talking about two different paradigms (the former proving to some extent successful whereas the latter not). Foreign aid policy is based on projects/programs which represent in themselves an obstacle to the end of making development happen.

Why is the problem with projects/programs? Latour (1996 p. 24 in Mosse 2005, p. 235) points exactly to this aspect: Projects remain forever *projections.* Their actions and events never have meaning in themselves, but are constantly recalled or translated back into the policy text, from which they can never fully depart in order to become part of the everyday (cf. Latour 1996: 24). These projects spread 'false models, simplifications, and development illusions.

The existence of projects/programs in itself represents an anchoring of 'doing development' in the continuous and fluctuating conception development to be found in the western countries. These

projects/programs are caged in the policies of donor countries. Aid is money, projects in order to survive need funding. As such, projects are forces to permanently adapt to the changing external agendas of donors whose commitment is questionable. "The aid donors' agenda thus appears unbalanced. They [donors] seem to have been willing to quickly reduce or terminate aid to many (African) countries for "bad government" reasons but unable or unwilling to live up fully to promises of positive aid" (Moore and Robinson 1995, p. 295).

An even more problematic aspect which concerns projects/programs refers to their inability to 'become part of the everyday'. This leads us to a real paradox. Western donor countries, with a 'continuous' understanding of development, attempt to produce development through projects/programs which are conceptually limited to a certain period of time, implying a rejection of continuity. This conceptual mismatch alone points to an inevitable failure of creating sustainable development.

> "'Sustainability is in many ways the ultimate test of development efforts. It requires not only that a project be successful in achieving its objectives during the project life but also that the benefits it generates continue beyond the time of the donor's involvement—the durability of success' (Sustainability in Development Programmes, DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation). […] A development project is sustainable when it is able to deliver an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time after major financial, managerial, and technical assistance from an external donor is terminated" (Cracknell 2000, pp. 246-7).

Further on, this struggle to create 'sustainable projects/programs' reveals the radically wrong focus of aid. The concern is focused on making sustainable the donors' projects, rather than the holistic functioning of a community. The concern stays with the activity of 'doing development'/the activity of the donors, rather than with 'development'/the activity of the developing communities (Cibian 2008).

A last problematic aspect about projects/programs deals with their incapacity to become part of the local. Currently development projects

miss their targets. There is no concern with the translation of development goals from a western culture to a local culture. This seems to be too harsh of a critique since the performance of such translations is not conceptually available. However, I argue that the existence of program/projects represents an obstacle to the development of such translations. The development projects being anchored in the donors' policies and only influenced by the 'local' (as they have to happen there) cannot produce significant desired alterations of the 'local'. This problematic aspect is reinforced by the fact that in many cases still, development policy is also segregated from other relevant areas as trade, security or health. It should rather be the opposite, development projects should be anchored in the local with influence coming from outside. "Donors and recipients have a long way to go in ensuring that the fruits of development reach the poor" (Cassen and associates 1994, p. 14). But once such projects/programs become anchored in the local, they become no longer projects, and that is where development actually starts (Cibian 2008).

Donors call these interventions projects/programs, however for the locals these projects/programs represent their reality/life and definitely represent their array of possible choices. Calling the life of a community a project/program places the dignity and life of those people at the level of technical decisions. Can such an understanding of 'doing development' actually produce development?

In the next section I will attempt to theorize the way in which aid can be understood as an international practice/ form of life, and its implications for the international order post-1945 world order. To this end I will start by referring to the Ikensberry's conception of constitutional world order, Mouffe's conception of 'agonistic democracy' and Risse's conception of 'logic of arguing.'

Making sense of aid within international relations theory
Ikenberry (2001) looks into how the international order has been reshuffled after great wars trying to offer an explanation for the stability of the post-1945 world order. States that come successful out of important wars can choose how to organize the post-war order. Such

states have three options: to dominate, to abandon and to institutionalize the postwar order. Consequently, the choice of the hegemon can lead to a different type of world order. Ikenberry refers to three theories that attempt to explain international order. Balance-of-power theory "explains order—and the rules and institutions that emerge—as the product of an ongoing process of balancing and adjustment of opposing power concentrations or threats among states under conditions of anarchy" (p. 11). Neorealist theory offers as well an explanation where "order is created and maintained by a hegemonic state, which uses power capabilities to organize relations among states" (p. 11).

Ikenberry argues that both theories fail to accommodate institutions in their explanations, he renders as well the liberal and constructivist theories as incomplete for understanding post-war world order creation. The author puts forward a historical institutionalist position which understands institutions as "both constructs and constraints. Institutions are the formal and informal organizations, rules, routines, and practices that are embedded in the wider political order and define the "landscape" in which actors operate" (p. 16). This understanding of institutions differs from the rationalist account in that institutions are more sticky and it differs from constructivism in that "it locates institutional stickiness in the practical interaction between actors and formal and informal organizations, rules, and routines" (p. 17), finally it differs from neoliberal institutional theory in that it moves past the key focus of neoliberals – "the way in which institutions provide information to states and reduce the incentive for cheating" (p. 17).

The argument Ikenberry (2001) builds up is that "the character of postwar order has changed as the capacities of states to restrain power and establish commitments have changed. The rise of democratic states and new institutional strategies allowed states capacities to develop new responses to old and recurring problems of order" (p. 18). This developments allow for the leading state to "move in the direction of an institutionalized settlement that binds states together so as to limit and constrain state power, including the power of the leading or hegemonic

state, [under such circumstances] the postwar order begins to take on constitutional characteristics" (p. 7).

Such characteristics come to define a new type of order, what Ikenberry calls the "*constitutional order.*" It is a political order "organized around agreed-upon legal and political institutions that operate to allocate rights and limit the exercise of power" (p.29). This term should not induce confusion. Indeed it suggests a similarity with the organization of democracies, however under the constitutional mode, the international order is still anarchic. The difference is that "institutions can be established that provide some measure of binding restraint on states and where domestic polities allow for the locking of international commitments, the conditions exist for an international political order to operate with some measure of constitutionalism" (p. 30).

Briefly such a constitutional order would presuppose: 1. the existence of some sort of basic agreement over the principles and rules of order, 2. the existence of rules and institutions which can impose limits on the exercise of power, the institutions acquire some sort of independence from the interests of any of the involved participants, and finally that the established rules and institutions are not easily alterable.

If "Historically, international orders have exhibited very few institutional limits on power" (p. 6) the post 1945 leading state/hegemon (USA) chose to enhance its winner-benefits (windfall of power) through the institutionalization of the international order. In this sense, Ikenberry argues that the stability of the international system post 1945 is an outcome of increased institutionalization of the international system – which covers the basis for theorizing about the possibility of a constitutional international order.

I am arguing that this type of constitutional order comes to increasingly characterize the international community of donors—more specifically, the OECD members.[1] The OECD Development Assistance Committee

[1]Australia: 7 June 1971, Austria: 29 September 1961, Belgium: 13 September 1961, Canada: 10 April 1961, Czech Republic: 21 December 1995, Denmark: 30 May 1961, Finland: 28 January 1969, France: 7 August 1961, Germany: 27 September 1961, Greece:

(DAC) members are preponderantly the democratic western states which are brought together by their involvement in aid practices. As part of the DAC, but as well as part of other multilateral institutions (United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund) and also as bilateral donors, these countries have moved towards more institutionalized relationships over the past half a century.

The Constitutional Order that Ikenberry proposes can be further substantiated by referral to Risse's (2000) 'logic of arguing' and Mouffe's 'agonistic' model of democracy. Risse's logic of arguing characterizes the increasing social interactions that are taking place.

Risse (2000) introduces in the debate between the 'logic of consequentialism' and that of 'appropriateness' a third dimension which characterises a different mode of social interaction – the 'logic of arguing'. The logic of consequentialism is understood as "the realm of rational choice approaches that treat the interests and preferences of actors as mostly fixed during the process of interaction" (p. 3) The central focus of rational choice is "strategic interactions in which agents participate on the basis of their given identities and interests and try to realize their preferences through strategic behaviour" (p.3).

Drawing on March and Olsen 1998, Risse (2000, p. 4) presents the logic of appropriateness as the constructivist rationality where "Human actors are imagined to follow rules that associate particular identities to particular situations, approaching individual opportunities for action by assessing similarities between current identities and choice dilemmas and more general concepts of self and situations." The logic of appropriateness brings added value in that it reveals the constitutive role of socially shared ides.

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27 September 1961, Hungary: 7 May 1996, Iceland: 5 June 1961, Ireland: 17 August 1961, Italy: 29 March 1962, Japan: 28 April 1964, Korea: 12 December 1996, Luxembourg: 7 December 1961, Mexico: 18 May 1994, Netherlands: 13 November 1961, New Zealand: 29 May 1973, Norway: 4 July 1961, Poland: 22 November 1996, Portugal: 4 August 1961, Slovak Republic: 14 December 2000, Spain: 3 August 1961, Sweden: 28 September 1961, Switzerland: 28 September 1961, Turkey: 2 August 1961, United Kingdom: 2 May 1961, United States: 12 April 1961. From
www.oecd.org/document/58/0,2340,en_2649_201185_1889402_1_1_1_1,00.html.

The third mode of social interaction, the 'logic of arguing' draws heavily on Habermas' work and is embedded as well in the constructivist project. It represents a truth-finding collective communicative process where "actors try to challenge the validity claims inherent in any causal or normative statement and […] seek a communicative consensus about their understanding of a situation as well as justifications for the principles and norms guiding their action" (p. 7). This third type of rationality implies as well that "the participants in a discourse are open to being persuaded by the better argument, and that relationships of power and social hierarchies recede in the background" (p. 7). The goal of engaging in such a process is to obtain a 'reasoned consensus.' It is important to note that Risse claims that all three modes of social action and interaction can be found in real social behaviour. In this sense, the important question becomes which logic is predominant.

For participants to engage in interactions characterized by the logic of arguing three conditions need to be met (according to Habermas): 1. ability to empathize, 2. "actors need to share a "common lifeworld" (gemeinsame Lebenswelt), a supply of collective interpretation of the world and of themselves, as provided by language, a common history, or culture" (p. 10) and 3. a recognition of equality among the participants and equality of access to discourse.

Risse (2000) argues convincingly that sequences of arguing are possible on the realm of international relations. The author does so by referring to international negotiations, but in the same time he points to four differences between diplomatic negotiations and the debates taking place in the international public sphere: 1. debates are more open, including generally more then the state actors, 2. such debates are more likely to include identity-related issues, 3. these debates in the international public sphere have a 'civilizing' effect on those involved, and 4. materially less privileged actors are more likely to have access and to present arguments which can convince the audience.

I argue that the community of donors (DAC members) have moved from a mode of interaction characterized mostly by the logic of

consequentialism towards a mode of interaction characterized mainly by the logic of appropriateness and especially the logic of arguing. Given one of the goals of ODA itself, i.e. to promote development, empathy is at least to some extent present. The increasing focus put on ownership allowing a more important voice for the recipient states is an argument for the recognition of some sort of equality among the participants and definitely an equality of access to discourse. The second characteristic Risse puts forward is to some extent more problematic as it presupposes that both donors and recipients share a common lifeworld. The problem here is that this assumption may not hold at a first sight as the conception of self may differ greatly in a western lifeworld from a non-western lifeworld. However, I claim that the practice of aid of over half a century has produced a lifeworld of itself which is common to both recipients and donors and which is based on the development of common practices and interactions over time. In what regards the larger debate concerning aid practices, this meets all criteria set forward by Risse: these debates are open as they include and value the participation of a plurality of non-state actors; the debate has raised several fundamental identity questions related to the self-understanding of the west itself or of the developing countries.

These debates can be seen as having a strong 'civilizing' effect. In Linklater's (2005, p. 142) view a civilizing process "refers to the development of social arrangements in which actors can satisfy their needs without 'destroying, frustrating, demeaning or in other ways harming each other'." Such a civilizing effect is noticeable in the contribution aid debates have had to the development of North–South relations. Donors and Recipients became partners in an enterprise (aid) which allowed for multiple channels of communication and which can be understood as contributing to maintaining stability (up to a point). It must be admitted however that in cultural terms such a civilizing process did not genuinely occur as most aid practices can be understood as mare impositions.

Finally, the less materially privileged actors (developing states) received a solidly institutionalized place in the international community which allowed them to advance credible arguments and persuade audiences.

The current developments in the aid practices (e.g. the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals) are to a great extent as well the outcome of arguments advanced by recipient states.

Understanding the mode of interaction among donors and recipients through the logic of arguing offers a new perspective on the prospects of development assistance. By engaging in a mode of interaction that allows participants "to mutually challenge and explore the validity claims of […existent] norms and identities" (Risse 2000, p. 2) the potentiality of the transformation of aid practices as well as the establishment of a more constitutional world order opens.

The argumentative rationality implies that "participants in a discourse are open to being persuaded by the better argument and that relationships of power and social hierarchies recede in the background" (Risse 2000, p. 7). In this respect the goal of the argumentative and deliberative behaviour is to see a reasoned consensus. This is evident in the evolution of development thinking through two aspects. First, the focus on poverty and second, the pressure put on western thinking by the constant failure to produce sustainable results through the disbursement of foreign aid. A good example in this respect is the widely recognized failure of the Millennium Development Goals at least in Sub-Saharan Africa. This failure triggers the necessity of justification both within the international public sphere and in front of the domestic constituency. Such a constant failure creates the preparedness to change on the side of the donors.

As such, the aid practice/regime represents a space where North—South relationships are institutionalized by the creation and re-creation of rules, norms and practices. Furthermore, the terrain of aid constitutes the place of encounter among the western and a plurality of non-western forms of life, and through institutionalization a form of dialogue emerges. If Ikenberry's constitutional order represents a useful framework for the understanding of donor cooperation, the more subtle and continuous interaction between western development projects and 'the local' of developing countries requires a more flexible framework. In Linklater's words the:

idea of an unfinished and unfinishable journey points to the need for constant attention to the danger that a particular world view will be a preferred and others marginalised by efforts to characterise ideal discourse. This is essential given the postmodern claim that no form of non-coercive deliberation may ever succeed in entirely removing all traces of power" (Lyotard, in Linklater 2005, p. 148-9).

Such a flexible framework can be identified in the conceptualization of Mouffe's (2001) agonistic pluralism.

The objection of Mouffe to deliberative model of democracy is that it fails to grasp the 'nature of the political.' As deliberative democracy deals away with power it cannot contain the process through which 'social objectivity' is arrived at. "If we accept that relations of power are constitutive of the social, however, then the main question for democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power more compatible with democratic values" (p. 125).

The purpose of democratic politics becomes "to construct the 'them' group in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed but as an 'adversary': i.e. as somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not call into question" (p. 126). In such an environment "bringing any deliberation to a close always requires a *decision* which excludes other possibilities" (p. 128). As such, agonistic pluralism "reveals the impossibility of establishing a consensus without exclusion" (p. 128).

Within such a framework the local understandings are allowed to co-exist with the western projects reflecting a condition of political struggle over the meanings that new development achievements/failures come to acquire. The two dimensions (the local and the western development project) intersect on a material level; however at the level of meanings in many respects they stay separate.

Foreign aid represents the practice which manages to transform the incipient constitutional international order into an order similar with Mouffe's idea of agonistic pluralism, and in some respects even beyond,

by allowing a dialogue between the developed and the developing where the developing states are recognized as partners and where they are allowed to take part in a world order-shaping dialogue.

Conclusion

I have argued that the practice of foreign aid represents a puzzle for international relations theory from several perspectives. Primarily I have shown a contradiction between the understanding of an international order based on sovereign states and the practice of development assistance and I have shown how the current understanding of doing development is inconsistent with the aims set for development practice. Within this context I have built up the case for the importance of an IR perspective on development aid as several of the major problematic issues development aid faces today rest on IR grounds.

In constructing a meaningful understanding of aid within IR theory, I found particularly helpful the concepts of 'constitutional world order' developed by Ikenberry, 'logic of arguing' developed by Risse, and 'agonistic pluralism' developed by Mouffe. I have, in the later part of the article, built up an initial theoretical framework which can facilitate an analysis of foreign aid practices/regime with the aim of contributing to understanding the transformation of the post-1945 world order.

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