INSTITUTIONALISED DREAMS

The Art of Managing Foreign Aid

Elżbieta Drążkiewicz

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For Ewa, Ola and Piotr

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

It was a beautiful summer's day as I got out of the car in the middle of the forest. The sun was shining through the tall pine trees. In the distance downhill from us I could see the shimmering lake. I was excited about swimming, picking berries and mushrooms, having a picnic with my parents and climbing trees with my older brother. Then I spotted something unusual. In this empty car park, next to our Fiat 126p there was another car. It seemed much larger, fancier, and it had different plates. It was not from here. Soon I saw a couple, a man and a woman, coming towards me. The moment they saw me they became strangely excited, smiling eagerly, waving their hands in a 'come here' gesture. I had no idea who they were. I had never seen them before. They hurried towards the car and opened the boot. I froze, uncertain as to what was going on. The man, rushed by the lady, pulled out two bags of sweets. They came towards me, and stroking me on my head, began pushing sweets into my hands. I could not move. It was exciting and scary at the same time. "*Ma-mo-!!!*" I cried for my mum. She came, smiling: "What is wrong sweetie?" she asked. "Mum, can I take these?" I was really embarrassed. I felt stupid for wanting to take something from strangers. These people seemed unusual, and had no reason to give me anything. It was even odder because they were obviously different: they spoke a different language, and they had a much better car than ours. But these were the sweets I loved, and we never had them at home. Or maybe we did have them (because otherwise how could I have known I wanted them?), but only on those rare occasions when one of the adults (parents, uncles,

aunties…) had travelled for work to the West, and brought a packet for me, my brother and our cousins to share. My mother agreed that I could take the sweets. Then the couple rushed to the car again and took out something else, this time for my brother. By this point, my mother was visibly uncomfortable. In a foreign language she was explaining that all of this was unnecessary.

I do not remember much more about this incident. I do not remember the taste of the sweets or even whether I ate them at all. What I remember the most, and this is why this image has stayed with me until today, was the feeling of awkwardness and discomfort about taking something from strangers, from *these* strangers. This was the first time I experienced the humiliation of the gift. Unlike other adults who would treat me, these two did not give me sweets because they wanted to be friends or reward my good behaviour. I had no idea who they were, but one thing was obvious even to the pre-schooler that I was at that time: they came from the West – a mythological, faraway land of prosperity and rich people. Even for me it was obvious that that was exactly why they were giving me goodies: because they could, because they had them and I (supposedly) did not, and I (apparently) needed or wanted them badly. Because they were from the West, and I was not.

That day in 1984 (or was it 1986?), I got my first practical lesson in gift theory, global economy and geopolitics. I did not discover the West on that day though. In fact, half of my extended family was living in the UK, Australia and the USA and they were often visiting us. My own parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles were also frequently travelling abroad for work. The West was elsewhere but it was part of my world; my naive child feeling was that of connectedness rather than rapture. But on that day, this naive bubble burst. On that day I learned that if there is a West, there must be something else, a non-West – my home. What I discovered that day was the division separating these two worlds, and the fact that they were not seen as equal.

Foreign aid is usually associated with high politics. Frequently it is employed in reference to states and societies as a whole. But in fact it is also a deeply personal matter. It is personal for those who are subjected to aid discourses and categorisations, aid projects, aid initiatives or charity gestures offering sweets. It is also personal for those who are at the forefront of aid pursuit: policy makers, aid workers or people like the Western German couple I described above, who – I am sure – 'just wanted to do good' and 'bring some sunshine' to the life of one little girl. This book is about the entanglements of all these

words – personal, political, moral and institutional – in the world of international aid. This book is about the Polish entanglements in this world – the state embodied in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGOs and various individuals working on all sides: field workers, aid administrators, journalists and bystanders who together struggle with international aid and try to make sense of it for themselves and for others. This book is about an attempt to shed the derogatory label of 'underdeveloped' through becoming a donor.

Poland, a Central European country, is not a typical case for studying foreign aid. Most such research concerns Africa, Latin America and occasionally Asia. The timing also seems unusual. After the original hype surrounding the transition of the 1990s, when a few careers were built on honing the concept of 'post-socialism', the region lost its appeal (in the eyes of Western audiences). Not exotic enough for 'real anthropology', not Western enough to be relevant to home audiences in Western academia. Yet there are many reasons why the Polish case might actually be very revealing for the analysis of foreign aid.

In spite of its Central European location, just like in Tanzania (Ferguson 1999) or India (Appadurai 1996), or any other country which at some point has been classified as non-First World, Poland's struggle with development and modernity (even if these are not always the native terms used) is a central feature organising social and political life. As Polish writer Sławomir Mrożek has observed, Poland is located to the East from the West and to the West from the East. These distinctive criteria of 'the West' and 'the East', while appearing as geographical categorisations, are in fact highly ideological. They appeal to world partition into 'centre' and 'periphery', First World and Third World, developed and undeveloped, modern and backward. As Maria Janion (2006: 12) has shown, Poland has been subjected to these categorisations and their fluid and relational nature since at least the nineteenth century.

This book does not go that far back into history, but even the study of the last few decades provides enough evidence to support the claim. Since the end of the Second World War, when the development discourse became an important part of international relations, Poland was classified in the mainstream Western discourse as a member of the Second World, an underdeveloped country. The change of political regime in 1989 brought some change to that narrative. Since then Poland has been talked about as a country making its 'return' to Europe. The future that was envisaged for Poland was that of a member of the First World, of the West (Buchowski 2001; Wedel

1998), but the divisions between East and West are still apparent. The anxiety about being viewed as second-class citizens of Europe is more than a mere emotion (Buchowski 2006; Zarycki 2014; Lewicki 2017). It is a strong political force that shapes the country's internal socio-political relations (this became undeniable in the Polish parliamentary elections of 2007 and 2015 when populist, conservative and right-wing parties gained power using the 'Poland needs to get up off its knees' rhetoric) (Kalb 2009a, 2009b) as well as its international politics (Polish foreign aid engagement, which I will discuss in this book, is a particularly good illustration of these mechanisms). In spite of the massive changes in the country, Western observers still define Poland as 'a country getting to grips with being normal … [which] still feels apart from "the West" and is struggling with poverty' (Ash 2011), and, moreover, only at 'the start of the road to the 21st century' (Elliot 2011). From both insider and outsider perspectives, there seems to be a never-ending story in which Poland and other Eastern European countries continuously try to 'make up for lost time', while chasing after the ideal of modernity, embodied in the 'ideal Western model'. The struggle with development seems like a never-ending story. So why, in spite of these disheartening characteristics, do societies such as Poland continue to chase the holy grail of development? Why not, as Dussel (2000, 2002) suggests, abandon the myth of Western-centric modernity? Why not create your own rules of the game?

According to Rist (1997), this is not possible because development is not simply an ideology, but rather an element in the religion of modernity. Like all beliefs, the belief in development is beyond dispute, and forms a specific type of collective certainty, providing the basis for social cohesion. While some elements of the belief in development might be debatable, or even doubted in private, it would be improper to question their validity in public. The rejection of belief in development and international aid risks social exclusion. This is because, as I have shown elsewhere (Drążkiewicz 2013), development is not an individual matter of choice. It operates as a global circle of obligations to give aid, to receive aid and to reciprocate aid. As Patty Gray (2015) has shown, even such mega powers as Russia are not in a position to risk ignoring these obligations. And so the development myth, together with the international aid paradigm, continues to organise local and global relations. In spite of the ongoing failures, states and societies continue their struggle with development as both recipients and donors of aid. In this book I want to describe what for my informants, for the people who

populated the aid industry in Poland, seemed like one more, but in their hopes final, attempt in these efforts: an endeavour to transition from being a recipient of foreign aid – a story that was so well described by Janine Wedel (1998) – to becoming an internationally recognised donor, a mature global player able to take care not only of oneself but also of others.

In this monograph I focus on Poland's attempt to create its own foreign aid apparatus. However, my conversations with other scholars working on Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and other Eastern European cases convince me that the Polish case is not exceptional, but instead representative of a larger experience of those in the east and south of Europe who have been subjected to aid from the West and are refashioning themselves as 'new donors' (Horky-Hluchan and Lightfoot 2015; Vetta 2018; Profant 2019). Yet I hope that readers will see beyond its 'Polishness' and 'Eastern Europeanness' and that this book will also become a cue for a larger conversation about foreign aid, rather than just a 'special case' of 'non-Western' donors. What I am proposing, however, is not yet another debate seeking to understand the difference between Western and non-Western donors. Nor is it a book about the effectiveness of aid projects, or life in the 'Aid Land'. Instead, with this book, through examining the processes behind the emergence of the aid industry, I would like to start a conversation that examines the 'hidden curriculum' of aid practice, and its side effects, which are not openly intended yet are strongly and systematically impacting the norms, values and identity of *both* aid recipients and aid donors.

The case of Poland, a country that has been on all sides of the aid chain, provides an excellent opportunity for such analysis. Poland's own struggle with development and its experience as an aid recipient allows us to examine the impact that the 'hidden curriculum' of aid practice has on the nation, state, society and individuals, their identity and the ways in which they construct their moral economies. It allows us to see the consequences that objectifying societies as undeveloped, lagging behind, not wealthy, modern, democratic or civil enough – in need of assistance – can have on members of these societies and the ways in which they shape their internal and transnational relations. At the same time, Poland's effort to create its own aid industry provides for the equally important study examining how being a donor, being self-defined as developed, impacts the very same issues. What does being a donor mean for the state, society, organisations and individuals? How does it impact its identity politics and moral economy?

Aid and development discourses have tremendous force. They motivate people to change themselves, their neighbourhoods and their societies. They generate ambition, feed aspirations to prove oneself, to become another, better version of oneself. Development, progress, the need *to become* 'civilised', 'modern', has been a positive driving force behind the society in which I grew up. The anger and frustration that things are not *as they should be*, a hope that a different reality is possible, have motivated people to make changes and to create a better world for themselves. Now, living abroad and experiencing first-hand the failures of the West, I highly appreciate and admire how creative and effective Polish society has been in generating change, challenging the status quo, even if what is presented as a good change is sometimes not good at all, and certainly not for everyone. But the same force that has such creative power is also the reason for burn-out, frustration and depression, because no matter what you do, how much you change, you are always left with the stigma of underdevelopment. In locations subjected to development, such as Poland, nothing ever seems good enough, especially when juxtaposed with the mythical and fantastical representations of the Western and developed countries. Identity is always relational, but 'developing' societies are particularly subjected to the external measurement – approval, praise, critique – of those in the 'West' or the 'North', those proclaimed as developed. Yet development presents itself as rational and attainable. So on the one hand development segregates people and societies into certain categories (developed, underdeveloped, misdeveloped and so on), but at the same time it requires them to change these very categorisations. By focusing on economic classifications, development identity appears modifiable: an economic position is not something that is fixed, it can be changed. Like a Fata Morgana, a mirage, it presents itself as within reach: just a bit more effort, one more reform, one more project, one more Millennium Development Goal, one more Sustainable Development Goal and we will be there… It all seems so simple. So why is it not?

As those studying modernity rightly point out, this process of development, of achieving modernity, is never to be satisfied, never to be accomplished. Modernity is vague, elusive, indefinable, which is why it can always be questioned (Friedman 1998; Comaroff 1999; Mitchell 2000; Dussel 2000, 2002). Consequently, development, a favourite child of modernity, cannot be *achieved*. There is no way to measure development, to test modernity; all efforts to find perfect indicators (the Human Development Index, or Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals) prove too narrow, focusing

predominantly on economic prosperity, hiding more than they reveal (Sen 1999; Comim 2017). Moreover, the politics of contemporary transnational institutions (such as the EU, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee – OECD/DAC, NATO) demonstrate that a state or society does not *achieve* its membership in the world of modernity, based on some rational regulations or indicators, but rather *deserves* it by playing by the rules set up by the wealthier and more powerful nations, or by imitating the nations that are the gate-keepers of the world of modernity – Western modernity (Böröcz and Kovacs 2001). Consequently, development does not have much to do with 'objective' indicators, with economy, but instead has everything to do with power.

Thirty-five years after my incident in the forest, thirty years after the end of communism in Poland, fifteen years after Polish accession to the EU, five years after Donald Tusk – a Polish politician – became the president of the European Council, there is (still), in my daughter's crèche in Ireland, a charitable collection for the needy in 'Eastern Europe'. Every Christmas, Team Hope Ireland organises a shoebox appeal for Africa and Eastern Europe. This specific initiative, one of many that help to cement the Irish identity as the most charitable in Europe, has specific socio-cultural effects. It allows the establishment of an identity of international superiority, in spite of the existing pervasive socio-economic problems at home. Paradoxically, while the goal of the aid industry is to counter global inequality, its hidden curriculum often contributes to them, by fostering certain images not only about societies that require foreign assistance, but also about those who provide aid.

As David Williams (2011) points out, for donor countries their involvement in international aid is a form of autobiographical exercise. Similarly, Virginie Mamadouh (2008) and Katy Gardner together with David Lewis (Gardner and Lewis 2000) show how foreign aid reflects and reinforces national ideologies of donor countries. This process goes hand in hand with constant reproduction of discriminatory notions about societies that are aid recipients, and even leads to racial discrimination (Goudge 2003; Baaz 2005). But while discriminatory representations of aid recipients have been criticised for a long time, almost no attention has been given to the examination of ways in which the aid relationship fosters feelings of superiority, of uncritical exceptionalism and pride among the donors.

Identity production is a highly relational process in which self-construction is as important as categorisation by others. As Thomas

Hylland Eriksen (2002) points out, identity production emerges through social situations and encounters. Group identities (especially ethnic and national identities) are defined in relation to what they are not, in relation to non-members of the group. They require simultaneous complementarisation (the acknowledgement of the existence of the Other), and contrasting (mutual demarcation, competition, conflict and dichotomism). Ultra-capitalist societies that fetishise economic growth, and whose main identification is based on neoliberal values, need Others as a measurement of their own success. They need Others – the 'Global South', the 'Easterners', the 'post-socialists', the 'underdeveloped' – as a constant backdrop for comparison. If they are not the most successful, the richest, the most productive, the most innovative, who are they? What will define them? What will be the source of their self-worth and pride? For societies whose identity is primarily built on the idea of economic and political superiority, categories of development (and post-socialism, with its fetishisation of economic relations) provide a great opportunity to keep their own identity intact, to avoid identity revisionism. Development ideology, the apparatus of foreign aid, paradoxically not only helps to combat world poverty and world division, but also contributes to this segregation. It is able to do so because development discourse does not simply define those to be developed, but also those who argue that they have already achieved that status, those who proudly refer to themselves as donors. In fact, in terms of identity politics, 'developed' countries need 'developing' countries much more than the other way around. As I will show in this book, the story of Poland, its manoeuvring between all these categories, illustrates this point in an excellent fashion.

Moving beyond Project-Centred Analysis

As many before me have shown (Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Rist 1997), foreign aid is not simply about social change. It is a form of a change that separates societies into modern and non-modern categories. As Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud (2005: 1) point out, conventionally foreign aid connotes improvements in well-being, living standards and opportunities. But as they also rightly note, the ideal of development, which international aid should enable, is unstable and vague. It presents itself simultaneously as an *ideal*, an imagined future towards which institutions and individuals strive,

but it has also been experienced and seen as a destructive *myth* of Western modernity. In spite of efforts to stabilise the term, there has been little agreement on it, with some scholars rejecting the desirability of development, and others looking for new post-development alternatives (Agarwal 1996). Much of the academic criticism of development came from the lack of satisfaction with the outcomes of aid schemes. Trying to understand this situation, researchers have mainly focused on locations subjected to aid (Hobart 1993; Crewe and Harrison 1999; Murray Li 2007; Scherz 2014). Even studies of international aid institutions have been singularly focused on their operations in developing countries (Ferguson 1994; Bornstein 2005; Mosse 2005b), without providing any understanding of how the domestic and global realities of these institutions shape their operations. In a similar way, the most recent Aid Land ethnographies (Mosse 2011; Roth 2011; Fechter and Hindman 2012; Smirl 2015) have overwhelmingly failed to explain how the work and lives of the aid workers are shaped by the cultures in which they were brought up. With small, though notable exceptions (Caufield 1996; Fassin 2012; Redfield 2013; Malkki 2015), research on the aid industry has predominantly been done 'out there' – in locations where aid projects are implemented. But why do we study in the South the issue that originated in the West, and is predominantly governed in the Northern headquarters? How can we understand the mechanisms of foreign aid without paying sufficient attention to the locations and societies from which foreign aid originates?

Realising the importance of this dynamic, I propose a shift in the study of foreign aid. I propose moving our discussions beyond projects, the needs of 'local communities' and conversations about how specific aid initiatives fit or do not fit into the local reality. Volumes have been written about those issues, and I am not sure we can say anything new about it. More importantly, this approach puts most weight on the recipient side of the aid chain, while completely ignoring donor societies. Such research criticises implementation techniques in the aid industry, yet leaves the overall paradigm of aid intact. It investigates specific aid schemes, but does not ask about broader foundations of the aid apparatus. It asks what aid does for people who are on the receiving end of the aid chain, but does not explain the meanings and consequences of aid involvement for donors. If we really want to move the discussion forward, we have to start asking questions about the places from which aid originates: what is the meaning of this international engagement for donor societies (Malkki 2015)? Why and how is the will to improve fostered

(Murray Li 2007)? What is the link between aid practice, national politics and local moralities in donor countries (Fassin 2012)?

Emerging Donors

With this book I want to demonstrate that in order to understand international aid, and development, we need to understand the social, political and cultural mechanisms that govern the work of the aid industry. The main questions guiding this book, therefore, are: how is the need to give aid born? How do aid institutions emerge? How do states become donors? Why do individuals agree or actively seek opportunities to share their wealth with others, to get involved in the lives of distant strangers through the practice known as international aid? These questions should apply equally to all actors, especially those in the West who proclaim themselves as 'established donors', who hold senior positions at international forums. However, the specific situation of 'emerging donors', who in the past decade have been building their Official Development Assistance (ODA) from scratch, facilitates an unprecedented opportunity to directly observe the formation of the foreign aid machinery. This book tells the story of one such donor: Poland. It examines the events and mechanisms leading to the establishment of Polish aid structures, as they unfolded.

The 2000s have been characterised by the birth of the so-called 'new donors': Eastern and Central European states, but also Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). A lot has been said about the political mechanisms leading to and resulting from these processes (Maning 2006; Bräutigam 2009; Kragelund 2008; Kucharczyk and Lovitt 2008; Six 2009; Mawdsley 2012; Sato et al. 2010; Bakalova and Spanger 2013). These works had excellent informational value, and I have been part of this academic movement myself. But one problem with these studies is that they tend to look at non-Western donors as a 'special case', rather than just a small part of the larger issue – the remodelling of the aid system in the post-Cold War order. As many of us studying this topic have noted repeatedly (Drążkiewicz 2013; Gray 2015; Horky-Hluchan and Lightfoot 2015), emerging donors – BRICS, countries of Eastern and Central Europe – are not *new donors*. All of them have been involved in global development for decades, mostly as members of the Comecon.

The creation of a special category of 'new donors' (non-DAC, emerging, non-Western) in fact facilitated the maintenance of the old

division of power, which now became organised along the lines of emerging versus established donors, but which in fact was replicating old Cold War or developed/underdeveloped divisions. Moreover, it led to the rebranding of Western aid providers. Through painting the work of 'new donors' as suspicious or even dangerous, Western aid providers, by contrast, were becoming more moral, more efficient, and simply superior. The timing of these events is crucial. New identifications allowed Western aid providers (especially those in the UK or USA) to overcome donor fatigue and to re-establish themselves after a decade of strong criticism that characterised the late 1990s and early 2000s (Moyo 2009). In a way, the re-activation of 'new donors' contributed to the rebirth of the Western donors. This specific dynamic suggests that aid has as much to do with *global* poverty as with the *domestic* identity politics and foreign politics of donor countries. There are no exceptions here; no country or society involved in international aid is immune to these mechanisms, and it is high time that we, as anthropologists, pay attention to these issues and include them in our analysis of development.

For too long aid agents have been treated as culture-less, nation-less, identity-less. Until recently, they have been described as uprooted from their home contexts, as if they were operating in a socio-cultural and political vacuum. Most ethnographies of aid note the national or ethnic identity of local workers and local communities and unpack the ways in which cultures impact certain projects. Significantly, however, no consideration is given to equivalent issues in regard to aid workers, who are usually described as members of the 'international community', as if they parachuted in from the moon (Bornstein 2005; Mosse 2005a, 2005b; Smirl 2015). However, as Tvedt (1998: 4) shows, aid institutions are significant not only for the regions that become targets of their aid activities, but also because they form an important part of the history of those countries in which they were set up. Aid agents, donor organisations and NGOs implementing aid initiatives, like other local organisations, express national traditions and historical social developments. They are rooted in local contexts, which not only shape the ideologies and world visions of their representatives, but also influence their possibilities for action via specific legal, economic and social settings. In this book, by telling the stories from the Polish aid industry, I attempt to demonstrate how important these issues are for the emergence of aid institutions, and the role they play in shaping the trajectories of the individuals who are the driving force behind these organisations. What I want to emphasise with this book is that foreign aid is not

simply an apparatus, but an assemblage of individuals whose agendas are culturally and socially shaped, but who also have their own histories, beliefs and dreams, and most importantly, they have the power to execute them. As such, foreign aid is always equally a personal and public matter, an individual issue and an institutional case.

Overall, this book is about the consequences and the beginnings, and a few things in between. It shows how international aid has the potential to change not only an aid recipient but also a donor. Chronicling the creation of the Polish aid apparatus, this book demonstrates how the process of emerging as a donor requires constant manoeuvring between international pressures and domestic legal and socio-economic, as well as political, constraints. The book employs a unique approach. It maps out the interconnections between realities in the country of project implementation and the region from which the aid originates. It also unpacks relations linking a state institution managing ODA, its NGO partners and powerful international players such as the EU or OECD.

In this book I demonstrate how emergence as a donor requires the establishment of moral foundations and political discourses about caring for distant others. I try to unpack the process by which state and non-state aid organisations elicit certain forms of knowing and acting through the production and dissemination of aid ideology and normative ideas, how they coarsened and heightened specific aid sensibilities not only within the industry but within broader society, through media advertising and informational and educational campaigns. I also try to demonstrate how these processes are negotiated and contested by members of aid organisations and the public, as well as how they are appropriated, how they contribute to a sort of collective effervescence in aid, turning it into an intense, intimate movement characterised by a strong sense of immediacy.

In order to convince the public of the necessity to share wealth with foreign strangers, sentiments and fantasies about the worlds of those who supposedly require international assistance must be mobilised. The *creative effervescence* (to use Durkheim's term recently reappropriated by Olaveson ([2001]) of the early stages in the process of emerging as a donor facilitated this creative process. Organisations were in a nascent state, most members young, highly passionate and enthusiastic about producing new ideas, even if the outcome was uncertain. The aid movement of that time had some characteristics of the community; even though there were clear fractures in the industry (Drążkiewicz 2016), there was a sense of unity

among the aid workers I met that allowed them to feel morally strengthened and to push new moral ideas, to strive for a new moral opening in Polish international relations that would include a development and humanitarian agenda. It was through these processes that the aid myth was formulated, and faith in aid interventions as a solution to global issues was generated. Paradoxically, however, for all these elements to be stabilised and naturalised, they must fade into the background. What comes to the fore is an institutionalised 'objective' aid system and 'rational' technologies of (what I call) 'bureaucratic activism'. The collective effervescence of the aid movement in order to facilitate its survival became counterbalanced with alienation of structure and institutions. The dialectical tension to return to the morally forceful and intense stage of emotional surge has not disappeared fully, however, and continues to resurface, though with new force and in new shapes via constant and never-ending efforts to reform the existing, now stabilised ODA structures, to find a perfect solution to the global problems (cf. Olaveson 2001: 107).

This book illustrates in precise detail these processes of institutionalisation and alienation. Through extensive engagement with ethnographic material, I demonstrate how, in the process of emerging as a donor, the technocratic approach, the tyranny of experts (Easterly 2013), gradually takes over the original effervescence. The aid activist turns into an aid expert; the volunteer-based grassroots society becomes a professional organisation. The bottom-up movement of foreign aid lends its legitimacy to the state, which then in turn outsources development implementation to specially designed civil society organisations. In this book I show how the creation of an effective Polish aid system became an obsession organising most of the ministerial and NGO activities. In its ideal (yet-to-be-achieved) form, the aid system is envisioned as a potential solution to all development problems. By mapping out the networks linking various international stakeholders in the aid industry and analysing the pressures between them, the book concludes that the obsession with the creation of the perfect aid system is not typical only of so-called 'emerging donors' but is characteristic of the aid industry at large. In this book I argue that in spite of its numerous failings, the aid myth is sustained as a direct result of the belief that the perfect order might be created, that the ideal system might actually be realised and bring about social change. From the perspective of aid practitioners, what is needed is yet another modification of the system, yet another redefinition of aid, yet another reform of

the aid apparatus. As a result, the process of emerging as a donor is never complete and never satisfactory; it can be perpetuated indefinitely.

Methodology

The path to this book has been long. As Vicky Smith (1997: 428) writes, and as is confirmed by Jakob Krause-Jensen (2013: 53), the average time in organisational studies to produce a book is over eight years, and ten years is not unheard of. That is also the case here, as my research for this book started in 2007.

My entry point into the industry was through the NGO, which for the purpose of this book I call Polish Assistance for International Needy (PAIN), and with whom I worked in South Sudan, as well as the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Department).

As in other similar cases (Ostrander 1993; Gellner and Hirsh 2001; Green 2006, 2009), my access to office workspace of NGOs and MFA required specific negotiations. Indeed, especially in the case of the PAIN, it became very clear that my presence in the NGO could only be facilitated under the condition of contributing to its work, through self-funded volunteering and taking up duties of the administrative and financial officer. Together with the organisation leaders, we came up with a contract agreement that defined my volunteering duties but also acknowledged my research interests in the organisation. As a result of this agreement, I worked with the PAIN for nine months in 2007 and 2009, but my relationships with several staff members from the NGO go beyond that period. The first month of my research I spent working in its Warsaw headquarters, preparing to join its mission offices in South Sudan. Soon I moved to Greater Upper Nile region, where I worked and lived together with other expatriates, Zofia, Kasia and Marcel. For Zofia and Kasia it was their first humanitarian engagement; for all of us it was our first time in Africa and together we were trying to navigate and make sense not only of organisational rules but also of the rules of the industry at large. At that time, apart from dealing with my administrative responsibilities, I followed my colleagues in their daily routines. My presence in the organisation was not always easy and conflict-free (see Chapters 5 and 6), and eventually the Desk Officer who first granted my access to the mission suggested that perhaps I had 'learnt enough' about aid and it was time for me to leave the Sudanese

mission, as our working relationship was no longer positive. He was probably right. Upon my return to Warsaw, I stayed in contact with Zofia and Kasia and some of the Warsaw staff, especially those working on projects related to development education and public campaigns. Occasionally, I participated in events organised by the NGO in Warsaw.

The second stage of my research was dedicated to gathering information about the work of other Polish NGOs active on the aid scene, especially those involved in Africa. I conducted interviews with approximately forty-five aid activists, politicians, journalists and aid administrators, which gave me useful insights, as well as comparative material to consider in relation to the observations I had gathered while working for the PAIN. This part of my fieldwork was also dedicated to learning about the ways in which aid issues and aid to Africa are talked about in Poland. My focus at this stage was on learning how various state and non-state organisations aim to engage the 'general public' in their work, and what kind of activities they put forward to make themselves visible and gain public support. How do they conceive of aid, and what discourses do they put forward in order to legitimise their involvement abroad? In order to find out more about these processes, I participated in a series of events (workshops, seminars, conferences, concerts, forums, public debates, press conferences, exhibitions, etc.) organised by the main actors in this industry. I followed social media as well as more traditional national and local media (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Fakt*, *Polityka*, *Przekrój*, TVP1, TVP2, TVN and Polsat, as well as Radio 3), focusing on their coverage of international affairs and aid matters.

The final stage of my research (four months) involved participant observation conducted in the Department of Development Cooperation of the MFA. The work in that institution was especially important as the Department is responsible for managing Polish ODA. It was MFA money that enabled the PAIN to conduct its aid activities in Africa at the time of my fieldwork. My first encounters with the Department were at the events it organised and through interviews with its staff. To conduct participant observation in a high-profile state institution like the MFA is virtually impossible, but one of the staff members drew my attention to the internship programme carried out in the Ministry. I was successful in the application process, in which I was very open about my research interests. When I started my work and was being introduced to the departmental staff, I always made clear that my reasons for becoming an

intern were not related to the hope of becoming a diplomat, but were motivated by research, and that I wanted to understand how Polish ODA and the Department work. When my internship was coming to an end, I was offered an opportunity to undertake some duties in a new capacity, as a contract staffer. I accepted the offer and for the next two months continued my work in the MFA.

Another engagement that also informed this book, at least its final tone, was my work with the Solidarity Fund (December 2012–January 2014), a government-organised and funded non-governmental organisation (GONGO) that specialises in democracy promotion. While I did not undertake research while working there, this experience helped me to consolidate my opinions about the process of emergence as a donor.

The work that led to this book is therefore an example of mobile ethnography: a multi-sited, multi-temporal field across which I tried to follow people, organisations and their projects as they constituted global and local assemblages (Marcus 1995; Ong and Collier 2005). While it is a study of foreign aid, it is very strongly rooted in organisational anthropology. The aid industry, like all complex organisations, is not easily confined in spatial terms, but often operates as a fluid conglomerate of people, ideas, meanings and material objects (Garsten and Nyqvist 2013: 12). As such, it often requires application of the research strategy that Emil Røyrvik (2013) calls oblique ethnography. Specific to the world of multinational organisations and corporations, this type of ethnography, like classical anthropological engagements, is a long-term, in-depth study of a given reality. But oblique ethnography also adjusts to the transnational reality of global industries (such as the aid industry) which often lack formal boundaries and in which ways of being in and out are actively created, maintained, changed and moved. It is an ethnography in which we enact the fields that construct the world we want to study, and which consists of constant entries and exits resembling the movement of the people who populate these worlds: like many workers in the aid industry, I moved between projects and organisations, I opted in and out of the industry, I experienced the highs of hiring and lows of firing, while simultaneously navigating my academic and personal obligations. There were periods, especially during my fieldwork in South Sudan, when I experienced enormous closeness with other aid workers, living and working with them twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (a closeness that was equally exciting and suffocating, often driving us mad – see Chapter 6). But around the same period there were occasions when I worked with people only

over email or by satellite phone, or when I was by myself in the compound, sharing it only with the guards and wondering how to do anthropology of Polish aid in South Sudan when, to my knowledge, I was the only Pole in vicinity. In contrast, much of my research in Warsaw, especially in the MFA, was marked by a typical bureaucratic 'lifestyle', working from 8am to 4pm, and in the evening going home to 'mind my own business'. However, this did not mean complete separation of 'public' and 'private', 'professional' and 'personal'. Following typical rules of engagement in Polish offices, and enjoying the young composition of the Department, my colleagues and I often celebrated birthdays, name days and other occasions together. Warsaw and Sudanese aid work seem very different, and that was reflected in my research methodology, but both are extremely important parts of the aid industry: one would not exist without the other. I did not find my juggling of various roles confusing to anyone. The industry is populated with members in similar circumstances who are working in many jobs simultaneously, who shift their status and roles according to circumstances (see also Røyrvik 2013: 81). The transience of our being together was not simply an outcome of the temporality of my research but rather a norm of the industry, which is characterised by global mobility, project-based employment and revolving doors (Smirl 2015; Vetta 2018).

Ultimately, as this book will show, and as my professional trajectory demonstrates, my relationship with the industry has been characterised by the coexistence of bridges and boundaries, rapport and animosity. But the guiding force for my involvement with foreign aid workers and their organisations was the productivity of our relationship (Marcus 1998; Røyrvik 2013). The mutual ability to contribute to each other's lives and works led me to this book, and I hope that it will allow me to continue this relationship.

In effect, as in the case of David Mosse (2005b: 13), my work constitutes an example of 'participant deconstruction'. As my presence in the aid industry was driven by my research agenda, I would like to believe that I was able to retain research distance and reflexivity (Gow 1996; Amit 2000; Eyben 2003) and extract my own opinions from prevailing models in organisations, gain critical insight (cf. Shore and Wright 1997: 16–17), balance between paraphrasing the discourses produced in and about the industry and denouncing them (Fassin 2012). Like David Mosse, I draw from the histories of other people; ultimately, however, it is my own experience, interpretation and judgement that imposes coherence on the narrative I am putting forward.

The story of the birth of the aid industry in Poland could be told in many ways. This book is in no way an attempt to speak on behalf of anyone in the industry. The reality of the sideways ethnography (Hannerz 2006; Garsten and Nyqvist 2013), such as mine, is that in my work I am focusing on people with capacities not so unlike my own, often stronger capacities than mine. Members of the aid industry, like ethnographers (and many of them have a background in anthropology), are themselves symbolic analysts. They are experts with a strong interest and capability in capturing, describing and communicating issues regarding their profession, actively doing so through academic publications, media outlets, PR and educational campaigns. They have a strong voice and they use it, and they do not need me to tell their story. Neither is this ethnography the normative study *of*; instead, it is selfish ethnography (as should have become obvious by now) – an attempt to educate my perception of the world, and through this book share it with others (cf. Røyrvik 2013: 85).

I owe a lot to the people I met in the industry, who let me into their worlds, who gave me jobs when academia did not, who trusted in me, who supported me and this book. In my writing, while dealing with many ethical questions resulting from the complicated relationship linking me and my research partners, I remembered the advice given to me by Olga, my dear friend whom I met during my fieldwork, and whose voice frequently appears in the pages of this book: 'you should only write about others what you would be comfortable to expose about yourself', she once told me. I have tried to follow that advice.

Importantly, most of the people who were at the centre of my fieldwork in the mid 2000s no longer work in the same institutions in which I met them. Many have left the aid industry. Still, to protect their privacy and their right to be forgotten, I have changed the names and anonymised the organisations they represent. To further protect my informants, I decided to build an ethnography in which people and their stories form composite characters based on a mashup of the different individuals and narratives that I encountered during my fieldwork (Sparkes 2007; Humphreys and Watson 2009). In most cases I use only first names. For some this might seem a controversial step, talking about serious experts and aid officials on a first-name basis. Especially to the Polish ear, where respect is often expressed by the usage of the last name, this strategy might seem inappropriate. However, by using first names only, I wanted to reflect a very specific characteristic of the emerging Polish aid industry in the mid 2000s: the very young age of its members. NGOs working in Africa

in particular were populated by recent university graduates. This was also the case for the Department of Development Cooperation. We were 'kids' in our mid to late twenties, and even though we wanted to be seen as experts, as seniors, we were taking the first steps in our professional lives, and had comparatively limited life experience. Consequently, we made many rookie mistakes, many of which are recounted in this book (including my own). But the goal of this manuscript is not to point fingers, but rather to attempt to show how messy and difficult the effort to establish foreign aid institutions is, and how many mistakes must be made before things can be done right (if they ever can – see the final chapter). I hope that by using only first names, I will be able not only to represent the reality of that period, but also to signal that the people who are at the centre of these stories are no longer out there, they have changed, matured, and they should not be judged solely by the actions of their youth, by the stories that are written here. Still, I recognise that as the Polish aid scene is a relatively small world, full anonymisation of the data is particularly difficult and often impossible. Moreover, some information that I had access to during my work with the MFA or the Solidarity Fund has been classified as confidential. Similarly, a lot of what I witnessed (and did) in the PAIN compound was very private and personal. How to build an ethnographically rich narrative in such circumstances, in which telling stories often means breaching confidentiality or endangering informants' right to privacy? This issue became particularly difficult. I realise that in my struggle to tell my story but at the same time not to expose too much, not to harm anyone, I might have ended up constructing a narrative that, at times, strongly relies on my voice and my 'authority'. While my particular way of dealing with this issue might not be satisfactory to all readers, it is a problem increasingly faced by ethnographers, and perhaps more experimentation is needed to find the best way to deal with this ethical dilemma (Mosse 2006; Elliott 2014).

There are few actors in this book that are not anonymised. To tell a story of Polish aid without naming the MFA, Polish Humanitarian Action, Education for Democracy Foundation, or Zagranica Group, without noting the role of such individuals as Janina (Janka) Ochojska or Krzysztof Stanowski in the emergence of Polish aid industry would be unmanageable. In anthropology we try to make sense of the social, yet as Caroline Humphrey (2008) writes, we cannot lose sight of the individual, especially as they hold extreme importance for certain social processes, and sometimes it is individuals, not some abstract 'phenomenon', that change the world. The stories of people

and organisations that appear in this book under their real names are such a case. While in this book, I undertake my own interpretation of their trajectories in the aid industry, most of the events I am discussing belong to the publicly available knowledge, and regards people who became 'public persons' or 'state officials' long before I included them in my book.

Nevertheless, in spite of the large presence of the PAIN, PAH, MFA or other actors in this text, this is not a book about any of these specific organisations, in the same way as it is not a book about the PAIN. Rather than a monograph on the history of specific, singular institution, this book is about the process of emerging as a donor, and about the shaping of the aid industry in Poland. While several organisations are used as case studies in this book, I do not think that their inner dynamics are unique. In fact, based on my interviews with representatives of other organisations, similar patterns could be found across the industry.

I shared drafts of this book with people who played a central role in my education about the industry: with some of my NGO and MFA colleagues. I do not know if any of them read it. Most of them never got back to me; those who did often explained that they were too busy to read it, or only read parts, but nevertheless expressed support for its publication.

Finally, there is one big group missing in this book, and these are the people who were at the receiving end of Polish aid. I write about Polish people in South Sudan, while my account of the Sudanese reality is very limited. This is not an ignorance on my side. It is representative of the industry, which at large shelters itself from local realities and communities (Mosse 2011; Fechter and Hindman 2012; Smirl 2015).

Some Polish aid workers whom I met, strove to burst these aid bubbles. Many, especially those remembering 'Marriott Brigades' (cohorts of aid workers who in the 1980s and 1990s were working in Poland but rarely made the effort to learn about the Polish society and integrate with it) declared that in their own aid pursuit they will not make mistakes of Western aid agents.

Importantly, however, the birth of the Polish aid industry did not happen in a vacuum. Even though many Polish aid workers were hoping to shape their relationships with local communities on their own terms and immerse themselves in local cultures, the push to follow 'best practice' of established donors, the need to fit into the industry, the urge to 'professionalise', to become recognised as a mature donor, often worked against them. A good illustration here

might be a situation in which Paweł, one of my Warsaw informants, found himself during his work in Africa. While he was trying to juggle his wish to immerse himself in the local culture and the need to fulfil the expectations of Western partners within the industry, even his choice of clothing became an 'issue': at some point he self-reflectively realised that he was dressing differently for his meetings with American aid workers and for meetings with locals. He did not want to offend the Americans with his 'kitsch bazaar-style sophistication' (most of his clothes came from the local market), but he also did not want to appear ostentatious with his Western style, especially in the eyes of local people; it was not seen as appropriate. Clothing might seem like a minor issue, but these standards, specific to the aid industry, stretched into many other life domains, from housing choices to modes of transportation, employment and relationship rules. They all contribute to the formation of Aid Lands – or rather aid bubbles. At the heart of this issue, as Paweł noted, was the aid philosophy, according to which:

> if you work for a certain development institution, then it is part of your job to be someone else, from somewhere else and not from there, [the Other] – not the local, because your job is to be the agent of change! You have to be someone else, that is it. So when you start to get to close [to local people] then you get out of control. … You have to be different.

I have written about these specific dynamics, the strategies of limiting and controlling human relationships between local people and aid workers, elsewhere (Drazkiewicz 2017). The point I want to make here is that these had a profound effect on aid workers' ability to immerse themselves in local cultures, to connect with local communities and be influenced by them in meaningful ways. Consequently, these specific locations in which aid workers operated in many cases became non-places (Augé 1995). The 'reductionism' of my book, the scarcity of information on South Sudan, on aid projects, is to some extent representative of the reality of aid. For many of my readers this might be a very uncomfortable omission. Yet I think that the frustrating feeling that it might generate, that something is missing, is very important, mostly because it is representative of the aid sector. Often these are the feelings that aid workers themselves also have.

My reductionism is not only a conscious attempt to create a certain literary representation, but is also a result of another important issue. This book is not about Polish aid to South Sudan, it is not an attempt to evaluate the PAIN's or Polish ODA effectiveness. Instead, it is a story of the emergence of the Polish aid industry. Therefore, in this

book I focus on issues that, in my opinion, became crucial for this specific process. Moreover, like in any other case of transnational and corporate study, it is simply almost never possible to draw the full picture. There are many other actors missing from this book, and many field sites to which I could expand my research (EU, UN, OECD, Ministry of Finance in Poland, several NGOs). But as Bruno Latour (2005: 148) has pointed out, sometimes the limits of such multi-sited and network studies are not just guided by the reality, but also by our word counts and time constraints.

Main Actors

While there are many actors in this book, two play main roles. These are the Department of Development Cooperation in the MFA, and the Polish Assistance for the International Needy (PAIN). The Ministry is responsible for managing Polish ODA (a detailed description of the ODA management system can be found in Chapter 7). The Department of Development Cooperation in the MFA is one of the youngest, yet most rapidly developing divisions of the Ministry. It was set up as a result of the EU accession process. The Department, which is in charge of managing ODA funds in the disposition of the MFA, grew in the early 2000s out of a small (two-person) unit in the Department of United Nations and Human Rights (DUNHR) (cf. Czaplicka 2007; Bagiński, Czaplicka, and Szczyciński 2009). With time, it eventually separated from the DUNHR. At the time of my fieldwork, the Department had approximately thirty staff members, many of whom were not on permanent contracts. The offices of the Department were located at the back of the ministerial building, in its least prestigious corridors, often referred to as the 'basement'. Today, the Department has grown significantly, and from the least prestigious department has become a recognised unit, occupying its own building.

In contrast to this top-down formation, the Polish Assistance for Internationals in Need was an NGO set up by a leader motivated by a strong conviction that global poverty must be addressed, that people in need deserve assistance. While the NGO had some considerable experience in international aid (it started from projects to Eastern Europe), its South Sudanese mission was its first attempt in providing aid in Africa.

While in Poland the PAIN was among the most crucial players within the aid industry – it was active in public debates on ODA –

and engaged in Aid Watch and Development Education campaigns in Sudan it stood out as the smallest organisation with the lowest capacities. The main focus of the NGO was water and sanitation. During my fieldwork, thanks to a Polish MFA grant, the PAIN drilled (using a contracted commercial company) eleven boreholes. It also organised a series of training sessions for pump mechanics and distributed among the trainees some basic repair equipment. For comparison, in the same period, another NGO operating in the same area, Pact Sudan, drilled approximately 166 boreholes. Another project run by the NGO was concerned with agriculture. Within this initiative, eighteen women received training in vegetable-growing techniques. For four months they worked in three small gardens created especially for this project, where cabbages, eggplants and tomatoes were cultivated. At the end of the project, all crops were distributed among the women who worked at the site. Additionally, the NGO was managing the building of Boma Community Centres in three villages. These small mud-houses, covered with iron sheet roofs, were fully built by unpaid 'volunteers', and only the costs of the building materials were covered by the project grant provided by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN FAO). The project also included a 'capacity-building' component, which consisted of workshops on project management skills.

This project, as well as the vegetable garden initiative, was managed by Kasia. At twenty-eight years old, she had the most experience in working in South Sudan, arriving there in early 2007. As a young graduate of agriculture in Krakow, she had been strongly interested in implementing her knowledge in a practical field. Soon after finishing her studies she became an intern at UNFAO in Italy. Sometime later she was employed by the PAIN. Water and sanitation projects were managed by Zofia, a 26-year-old graduate of African Studies. She came to this work from a centre for asylum seekers, where she had worked mostly with African refugees. To travel to Africa was her dream. Through the job with the PAIN, this wish finally came true. The head of the mission, Marcel, was also in his late twenties. He was Czech, and as he told me, he was proudly the only 'non-Pole' whom the PAIN appointed as one of its core staff members. According to him, PAIN leaders were reluctant to hire foreigners as they were convinced that since the NGO was called the Polish Assistance for Internationals in Need it should first and foremost be staffed by Poles. However, as he spoke impeccable Polish and was married to another staff member, he soon became an entrusted worker. Sudan was his second mission[1] with the PAIN.

Apart from these European expatriate staff members, the PAIN mission had short-term contracts with Sudanese project assistants, who were hired depending on the project needs. During my fieldwork there were at least two Sudanese assistants hired per project. The PAIN also had a contracted driver and a logistician on a permanent basis, both of whom came from Uganda. There was also a housekeeper and three Sudanese security guards working at the compound site.

The small scale of the PAIN's operational ability was reflected in its logistical capacity. At the beginning of the mission there were times when the NGO did not even have a functioning car. Its staff members lived in the smallest compound compared to other foreign organisations. Most of the office tasks were conducted in the regional Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM) office, where the PAIN was able to use the internet and electricity provided by a much more powerful generator than the one in its own facility. Only a month before my arrival in Sudan, the PAIN moved to a new, much larger compound. Like all other NGOs, it obtained the plot for free from the local authorities. However, for the first months of operation there, the compound did not even have its own latrine or office, and had only a few old tents in which PAIN staff spent their nights.

As such, the PAIN provided a sharp contrast with other foreign agents operating in the state. Since the end of the war, various foreigners were arriving in the area in large numbers. Soon after the war, the Greater Upper Nile became host to many international organisations such as MSF – Belgium, Intersos (from Italy), Handicap International with Atlas Logistique (France based organisations). Other organisations were also active in the area, among them Save the Children, Christian Aid and Pact Sudan. Apart from international NGOs, various UN agencies (FAO, World Food Programme, UN High Commissioner for Refugees) also settled in the town. A special position, marked by privileged access to the local authorities and a massive compound, was held by the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). This mushrooming of international organisations was a result of more than twenty years of involvement of various aid providers in the area (African Rights 1997; Riehl 2001; Egeland, Harmer, and Stoddard 2011). Now, once the security situation permitted, they could render their humanitarian call and move into development, which allowed them to move into the country in their full capacity.

Together with the globally recognised Western-based organisations, other institutions were also moving to Sudan with their own

agendas. Among them was ASCOM, a Moldavian petroleum syndicate. While its interest was clearly in the oil industry, it also played a certain role in the local aid environment. In early 2008, ASCOM opened the John Garang Institute, a higher education institution built by the consortium. It was also the responsibility of the Moldavian agent to secure educational services in this college. In the first year, this was secured by Moldavian academics. ASCOM also built a governor's residence. It cleared the area for a new market in the town, and cleared the bush surrounding Bor to allow further development of the services district. It also levelled and hardened roads within Bor. The details of these services were not known to the public and not willingly discussed by the officials. However, it was clear that they were linked to ASCOM's anticipated oil operations.

The developments linked to ASCOM in their modes of operation resemble, to some extent, the works of the other foreign consortium, linked to the building of Jonglei Canal (Toufexis and Wurmstedt 1983; Howell, Lock, and Cobb 1988; Ahmad Adil 2008). However, there is one striking difference between the present operations and those of the late 1970s. While in the past 'Sobat Club Med' – the nickname for the luxurious village erected to host foreigners building the Jonglei Canal (Toufexis and Wurmstedt 1983) – was in charge of the Western agents, the ASCOM compound was clearly an Eastern European dominion. These two camps, and the differences between them, were an interesting way of signalling the changes in global politics that took place in the thirty years separating them, the repositioning of stakeholders and the shifts in the global aid chain. This book contributes to the studies that aim to document these processes by telling the story of the emergence of the new aid industry in Poland.

Book Outline

This book is organised in two parts. The first is concerned with the ideology of aid, the search for the moral economy of foreign aid. The second part is concerned with stabilisation of those ideas and institutionalisation.

Chapter 1 serves as a historical and cultural backdrop to this monograph. This chapter assesses the shifting position of Poland within the aid chain, and demonstrates how this manoeuvring reflects major political changes in the world and echoes contemporary geopolitics. In the process, the chapter tells the story of a

country that identifies as both Eastern and Western at the same time. By becoming a donor, Poland attempts to challenge existing classifications that would partition the world into centre and periphery, First World and Third World, developed and undeveloped, modern and backward.

The chapter outlines three historical stages. First, it calls up past Polish involvement in various (economic, political, cultural) exchanges with African states, when Poland as a member of the Soviet Bloc was actively involved in decolonisation processes and modernisation schemes. Second, it discusses Polish experiences as a recipient of international aid. The focus is on the time of great transformation in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, the chapter introduces the most recent, post-EU accession era, when in order to finalise its 'return' to (Western) Europe, the country relaunches its donor activities. This time it follows the lead and rules set up by the dominant stakeholders in Brussels. At this point the reader is introduced to one of the main characters of this book: the Department of Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland.

This is followed by Chapter 2, in which I explain key historical, cultural and political mechanisms shaping Polish aid to Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In this chapter I also investigate the main discourses shaping this international engagement, and demonstrate how strong support for Polish involvement in the East is rooted in national ideologies and ideas influenced by notions of aid reciprocity.

Chapter 3 asks how, given the strongly national nature of Polish aid, support to other regions, specifically Africa, is mobilised. In this chapter I show that in order to gain public support for Polish involvement in foreign aid, a connection with Africa and its citizens, whom they envisioned as the main target of their donor activities, must be crafted. One of the outcomes of the aforementioned history of Poland is a strong (internal and external) perception of the country as one that is struggling with modernity and is itself in a perpetual state of development. As a result, emergence as a donor requires special efforts to convince the public of the country's ability (but also the necessity) to share its wealth with others.

One of the most prominent tools in this pursuit is 'development education', which targets the public in the home country. One example is Villages of the World, an open-air museum, resembling the nineteenth-century Great Exhibitions and erected by one of the aid organisations in Krakow. Its aim is to educate school children about distant societies and foreign aid, and to create a (supposedly) missing connection with the imagined, distant needy. In this way,

the organisation hopes to construct feelings of interconnectivity and mobilise emotional compassion, which eventually will foster support for foreign aid.

The next step in the process of emerging as a donor is the process facilitating the formulation of a moral economy of foreign aid, an issue I discuss in Chapter 4. Here I demonstrate how strongly those supposedly secular, modernist moralities, visible in development education, are in fact shaped by religious ideas of charity with specifically Catholic connotations. The chapter discusses these issues by showcasing the stories of the PAIN and other NGOs, and their efforts to emerge as donors in South Sudan. It describes the process behind the allocation of funds in Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and demonstrates how religious institutions coexist in harmony with aid agents, fashioning themselves as the vanguards of aid pursuit.

This chapter shows how it is specifically Catholic charitable thinking that penetrates the moral economy of foreign aid. It argues that the role of the Catholic Church in Poland's emergence as a donor also has a direct impact on the operational modes of foreign aid. Showcasing the efforts of different aid activists commencing their first aid projects in South Sudan, the chapter argues that due to the generally weak presence of Polish actors in Africa and their limited confidence in operating in this region, missionaries become a first contact point on the ground and take on the role of African gatekeepers. Their strong association with Africa and recognition as competent 'local experts' results in their identification as 'local partners' and puts them in an advantaged position in the funding allocation schemes.

While the previous chapters focused on *the need to help* (Malkki 2015) as a motivating force of foreign aid, Chapter 5 draws attention towards *the need to be there.* By examining the life of the PAIN's first mission in South Sudan this chapter asks about the origins of aid practice and the role of fantasies about distant locations in this process. The chapter shows that participation in foreign aid is equally motivated by charitable and political calls to assist those in need as by a fascination with distant places and a passion for travel. The chapter argues that the conceptualisation of aid work in terms of a 'mission', a unique job with a special, ethical goal and a difficult, risky operation which can only be done by selected individuals, ready to make sacrifices, enables constant recruitment of new cohorts into the industry. Furthermore, the chapter shows how this conceptualisation of aid pursuit translates into the need for the constant *expansion* of aid activities.

In the aid industry, success is difficult to achieve and measure, yet the existence of aid agencies depends on their ability to demonstrate their positive impact. In this context *expansion* provides an opportunity to measure markers of success quickly and easily: organisational growth, rising numbers of projects, inceptions of new initiatives and establishment of new missions offer a self-perpetuating signal of success. The success of aid organisations is never accounted for based on the number of missions they have closed (i.e. where they completed their humanitarian work), but rather on the number of the missions they have managed to open.

However, as expansion is by definition a dynamic process, it should never be completed, as this would mean stagnation. The case of emerging donors illuminates that maintaining the status quo is not enough and the aid practice can never be accomplished. The simple upholding of the existing operation is not sufficient: it requires constant re-discoveries of 'new' locations to be identified as being in need of aid and transformed into the new mission location or project site. The 'discovery' of those sites, and further expansion of the mission, becomes the goal in itself.

As seen in the previous chapters, emergence as a donor requires mobilisation of specific moralities and ideas of caring about distant strangers. Yet paradoxically, while these aid narratives and ideologies have held great importance, in the process of mobilising support for international aid, in the efforts to become recognised as an 'established' aid provider, they are becoming an obstacle and have to fade into the background. What eventually comes to the fore are institutionalised 'technological' and 'objective' aid systems promoted by the established players (here represented by the EU, UN agencies and the OECD) as the ultimate modalities of effective aid. These issues are a central feature of the second part of this book and the last two chapters.

In Chapter 6 I show that as a result of these specific arrangements, aid activists, when defining their work and organisations, manoeuvre between satisfying their humanitarian vocation and at the same time fulfilling contemporary standards calling for the institutionalisation of social activism. This process is particularly reflected in the struggle to define the meanings and modes of aid work: is it a mission or a profession? Is it a personal matter, or a strictly professional and structured task?

In this chapter, using stories describing the conflicts within the NGO mission in South Sudan over different ideas about work and life arrangements, I discuss the relationship between these two sides of the same engagement, between the 'angels of mercy' and

'development diplomats' (Tvedt 1998). We see how these two perspectives of 'personal' and 'professional' are negotiated within the space of aid organisations. The chapter demonstrates that the division between these categories is neither clear-cut nor fixed. Their convergence becomes one of the central characteristics of aid organisations.

In this chapter I also demonstrate how the decision to move away from a vocational towards a technocratic approach is a way of establishing one's own position in the aid chain. This chapter argues that progressive institutionalisation is achieved through international players and visions promoted by established donors. It shows how Western ideas about aid – promoting it as a domain of experts, a systematised engagement, not influenced by the 'emotional' and 'personal' but driven by 'rational' policies and 'objective' systems – are imposed on emerging donors, leading to the homogenisation of international aid.

Chapter 7 continues the debate over the institutionalisation of the foreign aid machinery. It starts with the story of a failed aid project implemented in South Sudan. Its lack of success was, however, not attributed to problems on the ground. Rather, the systematic arrangements of Polish aid and the way it is managed by the MFA in Warsaw were blamed. Consequently, the debate moves from consideration of the mission site in South Sudan back to Poland.

Through analysing the work of the Warsaw headquarters of PAIN and other aid organisations, I demonstrate how the obsession with documents, legal acts, strategies and policies is not only an attribute of the state institution, but is equally important for NGOs. Effectively, this chapter argues that in Poland, the state and NGO activists have more in common than they would like to admit. As a result, the aid apparatus is no longer (if it ever was) a Foucauldian (1980, 1991) or Scott's (1998) state imposing power and governing the realities of its subjects, but instead a hybrid of institutions (NGOs, state institutions, international agencies), which together create complex configurations of power.

This chapter considers the obsession with reforming – though not abolishing – the system of governance. It discusses the phenomenon which I define as 'bureaucratic activism', a form of social action in which the bureaucracy is not just an *object* of change, but a *tool* for it. Presented as technical, de-politicised methods of governance, policy papers, strategies and other documents become envisaged as markers of objectivism, professionalism and expertise.

The aim of this chapter is to consider why, given that there is such dissatisfaction with how policies work, there is still so much

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

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

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

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

Note

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

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1

From Recipient to Donor

One of the most spectacular wins of the 2019 European Parliament elections in Poland was the victory of Janina (Janka) Ochojska. Janka, an NGO leader, the founder of the Polish Humanitarian Action, managed to secure fourth result in the country, overwhelmingly defeating many professional politicians. Even though she was new to political campaigning, her election should not come as a surprise. As one of the most recognisable people in the country, Janka has been regularly featured on the lists of the most trusted, respected and influential people in the society. She was regularly appearing in the media, discussing her humanitarian work around the world. Politicians of the European Coalition, who in these elections were determined to beat conservative Law and Justice Party, were clearly hoping to capitalise on her reputation. That might explain, why they not only came up with the idea of her candidacy, but also offered her the first position on their electoral list. It was a well-calculated political move on their behalf, to defeat strong competition. These are typical political strategies of the EU elections.

However, what was striking in this case was that Janka's winning campaign was not built on making promises that would directly benefit Polish society; she was not promising to fight for Polish people and their betterment at the EU forum, to secure the best deals and benefits for them. Instead, she explicitly stated that her priority in Brussels would be to fight against global poverty, and, if elected, that she would focus on working with the Development Committee for the betterment of the needy around the world. Janka's approach

stood in sharp contrast with other political campaigns of 2019, which centred on national issues and the future of the EU in the post-Brexit era. It also stood out among all other political campaigns of the last two decades.

In 2008, only ten years earlier, I interviewed Filip Kaczmarek, one of the first Polish Member of the European Parliament. In our conversation he admitted that among nineteen Polish MPs representing Civic Platform and Polish People's Party in the EU (the same organisations that in 2019 invited Janka to join them in the EU run), he was the only politician interested in working at the Development Commission, but even for him it was not a priority. At that time, the discourse dominating public debates in the country was still emphasising the need of external support and the EU funds for fostering positive changes in the Poland. The term 'development' was mostly associated with regional, local growth, rather than international cooperation. At that time, it was impossible to build any political capital or to win any elections by prioritising the needs of the Global South. But in 2019, Janina Ochojska, a social activist who built her name on helping distant strangers and working in development, succeeded. Her victory might suggest that perhaps a transition from being an aid recipient to being a donor was gradually consolidating and gaining importance for the country identity. But how does such a change takes place? How does one become a donor, how does the state get involved in foreign aid?

According to Janka,[1] the beginnings of this process took place in 1992 in Lyon, when she was visiting her friends from the EquiLibre foundation, a French organisation assisting victims of war-tormented Yugoslavia. Originally, the organisation was called Amitié Pologne (Friendship with Poland). It was set up in the early 1980s as a response to Polish economic and political crises, and through parish networks it was providing food and sanitary as well as medical items to the needy in Poland. Now, in the 1990s, while it still ran activities in Poland, in which Janina was heavily involved, its main operation had shifted towards the Balkan crisis. Sitting in Lyon and observing the busy work of the organisation, Janina asked if she could be useful. Soon after, she was on her first humanitarian convoy to Sarajevo, and went on a journey that not only changed her life, but also became pivotal in the history of Polish aid.

The atrocities that Janina witnessed in Bosnia, and her observation of humanitarian workers struggling to assist those in need, motivated her to change her focus and get involved in the aid activities on the giving end rather than the receiving end. When she returned to

Poland in late November, she was determined to organise humanitarian aid for Sarajevo. She went to Warsaw and visited a friend, Konstanty Gebert, who in *Gazeta Wyborcza* was writing about the war in Yugoslavia. Hearing about her ideas, he put her in touch with a colleague from Polish Radio 3, who immediately invited her to talk on air about her plans to organise a first Polish humanitarian convoy. She went immediately, but in fact at that time she had no real plan, no logistical backing, no office, no phone, not even a storage space or a truck. To make things more complicated, at that time Janina didn't even live in Warsaw. When the journalist asked, while on air, for contact details for those willing to get involved, thinking on her feet Janina gave the number of a friend of a friend, Magdalena Grodzka, whom she had met the very same day and who had expressed an interest in the initiative. The moment the interview was over, Janina tried to reach Magdalena on the phone, to warn her about the situation and to apologise for putting her on the spot. The line was busy, so she rushed to Magdalena's apartment. Magdalena opened her door visibly excited: people were calling non-stop and they wanted to get involved.

Magdalena's apartment soon became the logistical hub for this very first humanitarian endeavour in post-socialist Poland. The media quickly picked up on the story, giving unprecedented visibility to the cause and to Janina – who soon became one of the most known social activists in Poland. Indeed, this was a newsworthy story: the main discourse at the time was concerned with austerity measures, huge inflation (251% in 1989; 585% in 1990; 70% in 1991; 43% in 1992), mounting unemployment (which went from 0% accounted by the socialist state in the 1980s to officially accounted levels of 15% in 1992), privatisation and state reforms. The idea of assisting people in a foreign country when there were clearly so many things to be done in Poland, and so many people in need at home, was ground-breaking. In a way, however, it was also very uplifting. After years of hardship, it was taking attention away from internal difficulties and putting the domestic struggles in a new perspective. This seemed to be reflected in the popular support that Janina and her action received. Her collection turned out to be a great success, with hundreds of people bringing goods, volunteering their time and offering help with transport. Finally, after hectic preparations, on 26 December twelve trucks left Krakow for Sarajevo. In Rijeka they joined the European Peace Convoy. This meeting, while important for safety and logistical reasons, also had a more symbolic meaning (at least for Polish participants): according

to Janina, when Polish trucks arrived, other members of the convoy–representatives of France, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany – welcomed them with applause. For the Polish team this was a meaningful appropriation, a sign of broader geopolitical change, a confirmation that 'Poland [had] joined the family of countries giving aid. We are no longer a country which is only getting assistance' (Steciuk and Szczygieł 2002: 56).

This account describes the birth of the Polish Humanitarian Action, one of the first and the most important grassroots Polish foreign aid organisations. Yet this NGO is not unique. It echoes one of the most important notions that provided a meta structure for Poland's emergence as a donor at large: the need to shed a shameful memory of poverty and economic crisis, the need to contest an uncomfortable identity as an aid recipient and to move towards a new identification as an aid donor, which would signal a new social status in the international arena. It was about the need to regain power in the uneven circle of international aid exchanges and to pay back the debt incurred when Poland accepted foreign aid. It was a leitmotif of Poland's emergence as a donor, tirelessly repeated by aid activists on all sides in their official statements but also in more informal settings. Fifteen years after the Sarajevo convoys organised by Ochojska, when I talked to MFA civil servants about the origins of Polish ODA, they provided almost the same narrative, admitting that Polish aid was a way of building the national image. As one of my MFA interviewees explained, Polish involvement in foreign aid provided an excellent opportunity to finally

> build an image of Poland as a country that is developed. Since our [departmental] beginnings, [in 2005] we were still encountering symptoms suggesting … evidently that we are still perceived [in the West] as a developing country. … So … promoting the Polish image through development cooperation allows us to create a notion that we are now a donor, a member of the donor community. Moreover, we are an EU member, so we do belong to the club of the most experienced donors, the oldest ones.

Significantly, in all these accounts what mattered was the perception of Poland not among aid recipients, but among the Westerners: those with whom MFA officials were meeting in Brussels, those with whom Janina was meeting during her humanitarian work.

The narrative of transition from aid recipient to donor not only projects national sentiments and reflects the hierarchies of the global political economy, but it also reflects the personal trajectories and views of those behind Poland's emergence as a donor. Ochojska's

presence in Lyon in 1992 was not incidental, nor was it her first visit to the town. Ochojska is a polio survivor and through her life she has struggled with a severe devastation of her backbone. She spent a large proportion of her childhood in medical institutions for health betterment, and underwent a series of operations. However, in her twenties she was still in danger of losing the ability to walk. At that time Poland was undergoing a severe economic crisis and there was no hope for another, this time experimental operation being done in the country. However, there was a possibility of undertaking such surgery in France. A friend of a friend, a French nun, took Ochojska's medical documentation to Lyon, where doctors agreed to treat her. The three operations and convalescence that Janina underwent in 1984 were funded by the French government and through individual contributions. This was not only a pivotal moment in Ochojska's personal life, as it saved her health, but it was also decisive for her professional trajectory. Firstly, it linked her with Amitié Pologne, the organisation whose members supported her during medical treatments in France, and who since the 1980s were providing convoys with medical aid to Poland. It was the same organisation that a few years, under a new name of EquiLibre, later moved its aid operations from Poland to the Balkans, and with whom Janina organised her very first convoy to Sarajevo. And secondly, perhaps even more importantly, this French experience became a primary motivation for her future aid work, which 'is somehow a form of paying back the debt [she] incurred back then [in Lyon]' (Ochojska and Bonowicz 2000: 101). Janina's experience is unique, but her need to reciprocate the gift of aid is not uncommon. In fact, as the public opinion polls carried out by the MFA suggest, when asked 'Why should Poland support less developed countries?' most respondents call up moral obligations and agree that 'richer countries used to help us, so now we have to assist poorer countries' (TNS OBOP, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2015).

While these specific discourses of transition from aid recipient to aid donor are very important, they only tell part of the story. The reciprocity narrative, in its focus on Polish economic history and the shift from underdevelopment to development, from poverty to wealth, masks other factors that played a crucial role in shaping the Polish foreign aid apparatus: national identity politics, state history, geopolitics. With this chapter I hope to unpack at least some of these. I will start with a historical account in which I provide a brief description of the Polish economic struggles of the late 1980s and early 1990s – a period in Polish history that, while brief, became detrimental

for Polish identification as a poor, underdeveloped country, an aid recipient. I will later examine a political project emphasising this specific experience and the concurrent forgetting of Polish involvement in the Global South throughout the Cold War as a political ally and donor. I will examine the role this selective usage of history played in creating the categories of 'emerging' and 'established' donors and the power struggles between stakeholders in Poland and the EU over what development is about, where and how foreign aid should be delivered. Finally, while explaining Poland's struggles to create its own vision for foreign aid, I will show that even though this process seems to be concerned with distant strangers, it is in fact shaped by the ideas that people have about themselves and their own countries.

The Crisis of the 1980s and Humanitarian Aid

Most experts working on Poland's emergence as a donor date the process back to the Polish accession to the EU (Czaplicka 2007). However, even though the EU required Poland to set up its ODA institution, this story has its roots much earlier, and in order to understand it, we have to step back at least to the Polish People's Republic (PPR). The modernisation goals set up by post-war Poland required strong financing. However, the socialist, centrally planned economy was not able to fully achieve these goals. Part of the funding therefore came from international borrowing. In 1970, Polish foreign debt was estimated at USD 1.1 billion, yet by the 1980s it had reached USD 24.1 billion. Growing economic difficulties, coupled with the undemocratic regime, led to political unrest and the growth of the opposition movement known as Solidarity. By 1980, the situation in country had become so dire that, fearing revolution and pressurised by Moscow, the state decided to install martial law. To deal with its economic problems, Poland did what most other national debtors did at that time: it borrowed more. Eventually it got caught up in a typical vicious circle: the borrowing of the 1970s had to be repaid by the 1980s, but as there were no resources to pay back the debts, the country needed to borrow more to repay the first credits, eventually incurring tremendous debts. By the late 1980s, Polish foreign debt had practically doubled, reaching USD 46.1 billion in 1990.

At the micro level, these macro-economic difficulties were translated into a chronic state of economic shortage, involving constant difficulties with production and distribution of goods and services (Kornai 1980; Mazurek 2010). The shortage economy already

characterised Poland in the 1970s, but in the 1980s it reached its peak. After the introduction of martial law, the situation was so bad that in spite of the ongoing Cold War and the rivalry with the West, the government allowed the influx of foreign aid to Poland. Poland now for the first time experienced aid that was not directed towards improving the state economy but was directed towards society. Officially it consisted of humanitarian assistance. Through less official channels, the Solidarity movement was targeted with aid; today this would be dubbed 'democracy promotion'.

Western NGOs and church institutions assisted the country with food and medical supplies. Individuals in Germany, France, Sweden and other places were also organising various fundraisers. A popular form of support were packages of goods, which were sent to organisations in Poland and later distributed by church and community organisations. In 1982, by decision of the Bundestag, all aid packages to Poland, including those sent between individuals, were to be delivered by the German postal service for free. It is estimated that within that framework more then 8.5 million packages were sent (Cöllen 2012). These packages, which indeed reached many households in Poland, to this day are recognised as a symbol of the generosity and support that Polish society received from distant strangers at a time of great hardship. At the same time, through less official and often illegal channels, foreign NGOs, individuals and even state-funded organisations such as the American Endowment for Democracy were financially supporting the Polish opposition movement (Domber 2014). Particular emphasis was placed on supporting free underground media in Poland, and financial provisions to opposition organisations.

This substantial assistance was coupled with symbolic support: throughout the Western world, demonstrations and various events (talks, exhibitions, concerts and so on) were organised to raise funds and show support for the Solidarity movement and Polish society. It is difficult to assess the actual impact these initiatives had on the Polish political turnover of the 1980s, but they were surely appreciated by many. Those who were active at the time in the opposition movement, but also those who today are active in development cooperation and democratisation schemes East of Poland, still often use these initiatives as an example of positive aid practice.

In spite of state attempts to resuscitate the dying economy, by the late 1980s the country was bankrupt, and with growing opposition political turnover became inevitable, leading to the 1989 Round Table negotiations between the Communist government, leaders

of the democratic opposition movement (Solidarity) as well as religious leaders (Catholic and Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland). Finally, on 4 June 1989, for the first time in its post-war history, Poland held its first democratic elections, and the great project of socio-economic reform had begun (Sachs 1994, 2006).

Post-1989 Challenges: Aiding the Transition

This was the time when the biggest influx of Western aid to Poland took place. The project of Polish transformation from communism to whatever came next meant new challenges. It included not only changes within the economy, infrastructure and administration, but also the crafting of a new society with a civil society as its central ideal (Drążkiewicz 2016). The collapse of the affiliated socialist regimes provoked highly optimistic reactions in both the Eastern and Western Bloc. There was a shared feeling that a new historical era had begun, that new possibilities lay ahead for the freshly made post-socialist countries. The past had been separated from the present with a 'thick line', as Tadeusz Mazowiecki, first prime minister of Poland after the collapse of the communist regime, declared in his first parliamentary speech. It was time for a new order. It was expected that the West would open its doors and accept new members into its community. Whereas many Poles uncritically perceived the West as heaven on earth, the West was celebrating the triumph over Soviet power and was impatient for a final manoeuvre that would entail the rapid political and social transformation of the Eastern countries, concluding with their acceptance into Western Europe. For both sides involved, but especially for the West, it seemed obvious at that time that changes could be accomplished quickly – US aid planners, for example, assumed foreign assistance would only be needed for five years, since in that time Poland would 'graduate' in this 'evolution'. Such ideas were promoted by Western missionaries of economic change, among them Jeffrey Sachs, who hyped the 'shock therapy' and 'big bang' concepts over 'gradual' change with arguments such as: 'Suppose the British were to decide to switch from driving on the left side of the road to the right side? Would you recommend that they do so gradually, starting with trucks one year and cars a year later?' (Sachs 1994; Wedel 1998: 21–22). In reality, however, these catchy phrases meant unfair privatisation, the loss of national industry to foreign investors, big cuts in public expenditure and galloping unemployment. From

the shortage economy, Poland moved to a 'tithing belt' economy, and people were constantly reminded that they must put up with austerity measures in order to facilitate improvements that would benefit the country in the long run.

As a result of perceiving this historical moment as a one-time opportunity to effect change, an unprecedented flow of aid followed, with Poland receiving nearly half of the aid to the former Eastern Bloc. All efforts were directed towards 'elevating' Poland, together with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (which have been 'praised' with the most aid for their leading role in demolition of their socialist regimes), 'up to the level' of their Western neighbours. The task of modernisation, 'bringing Poland back to Europe', seemed to be only a matter of time and money, of fixing what had been 'destroyed' by socialism. To make sure that the goal was accomplished, the changes had to have a totalising nature.

Transformation was about to touch every domain of life in Poland: 'The prevailing idea, in both East and West, was that Eastern Europe should not look to the West only for financial help and political models but also for economic strategies and cultural identity' (Wedel 1998: 16). Modernisation through aid and development programmes was meant to transform the society as a whole. Patterns for this change – recipes for a new society – were prescribed and delivered by Western (especially North American, British and German) experts who at the time were visiting the country in large numbers. Although Western agencies differed among themselves in their working habits and aid patterns, in general it can be stated that it was Western and not Eastern partners that had control over money, project personnel or even knowledge and concepts. Everything that did not match Western ideas about project organisation, work methods and so on was discouraged and considered as part of the old regime, as a backward relic that needed to be got rid of and exchanged with 'proper' Western concepts or formulas (Sampson 1996, 2002; Wedel 1998).

Special value has been placed by Western donors on supporting efforts to create a civil society. Of course, one could ask why building a civil society would be a goal in a country with a very recent history of strong underground opposition and that had not yet fully recovered after a successful civic revolution (Buchowski 1996; Drążkiewicz 2016). However, for Western donors, a civil society meant something different than just the ability for people to exercise their agency and actions upon the state. The idea of a civil society as it has been promoted by Western experts epitomised such grand values as liberal individualism, pluralism and a strong demarcation

between private and public. At the centre of these processes were institutionalised non-governmental organisations that became envisioned as the embodiment of the new civil society. Democratisation has come to be understood in quantitative terms, and special emphasis has been placed on increasing the number of NGOs. According to Steven Sampson, 'The goal in Poland, for example, was to increase the number of NGOs from 3,000 in 1988 – far above any Eastern European country – to 20,000 by 1992' (Sampson 1996: 128). However, the idea was not only to create as many NGOs as possible, but to create NGOs that would explicitly imitate western NGOs (ibid.: 129). It was a pedagogical effort: special workshops and study trips were organised to showcase 'Western' solutions and 'best practice' and to inspire the replication of these models in Poland.

These specific but relatively short periods in Polish history, when it became a subject of foreign aid, became crucial for shaping both internal and external perceptions of Poland and the country's identification as a 'misdeveloped' and poor state. Fed with Cold War propaganda, most citizens of the West remained isolated and distanced themselves from Eastern Europe, never attempting to cross the eastern borders of Germany or Austria. Most of them only got to know Poland, and other countries of the Bloc, when they were at their lowest economic point, in need of help. Consequently, what otherwise could be seen as a relatively short period in the country's history became a primary lens through which the country was perceived externally: a poor country in need of external assistance, an aid recipient. This image also became an important trait in Polish auto-perception – not because underdevelopment and endemic poverty were somehow 'natural' and intrinsic to the 'Polish condition', but because they were not. The economic crisis of the 1980s, and the necessity to use foreign assistance, was such a traumatic experience that it left a permanent mark on the social identity. As I will show in the following sections and chapters, these historical experiences and identity politics played a pivotal role in shaping Polish foreign aid and Poland's identification as a 'new donor'.

Pre-1989 Challenges: Economic, Political and Social Cooperation with the Global South

Poland in fact had a long history of participating in the aid chain, not only as a recipient but also as a donor of foreign aid. Obviously,

Figure 1.1 *The picture illustrating Stanowski's article on the history of Polish aid. The slogan on the poster reads: 'Never again comrade's aid'. The picture was taken in Cieszyn on 21 August 1989. Photo credit: NAF Dementi agency.*

during the Cold War Poland was not a main player in the international arena. But just like all other members of the Eastern Bloc, it was an active actor in the global political economy, contributing to global development as a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)[2] and through numerous bilateral agreements with African, Asian and Latin American countries. In dominant narratives on Polish aid, however, this forty-year history of development, which created the very categories of the First, Second and Third World and shaped the politics of development, is omitted. Instead, the suggestion is made that it is exactly the end of this historical period that paved the way for developmental cooperation. In the mid 2000s, at the earliest stages of the creation of Polish aid organisations, most NGO activists argued that it was due to the end of communism in Poland that development cooperation could actually begin. When Krzysztof Stanowski[3] wrote an article for the UNDP's Polish website in 2003, sketching the history of Polish foreign assistance, he decided to illustrate it with a photo taken in the Polish-Czech border city of Cieszyn in 1989, during a demonstration commemorating the twenty-first anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia (Figure 1.1). At first glance, as an illustration of an article on Polish aid, it might seem out of context.

But the banner hold by the demonstrators reveals the message behind the photo. It says: 'Nigdy więcej bratniej pomocy!' (Never again comrade's aid!).

This slogan represents in a nutshell the socio-political spirit in which Polish aid was re-emerging in the early 2000s. It demonstrates the passionate urge to begin the history of the Polish state and its institutions (including those of foreign aid) anew. It points to the new future that would have nothing to do with the socialist past but would embrace the struggles of democratisation and the fight for freedom.

Similar narratives were mobilised at the state level. According to the first Strategy for Poland's Development Cooperation,

> the primary factors influencing international development cooperation include: a) Globalisation in the world economy, combined with liberalisation of financial transfers and the emergence of a knowledge-based economy on a world scale; b) *The end of the Cold War and democratisation* in Central and Eastern Europe, which increased the competition for aid funds between developing countries and those undergoing systemic transformation. … (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003; emphasis added).[4]

This first strategic document on Polish aid is an excellent example of the development discourse that was at play in the earliest stages of Poland's emergence as a (Western) donor. It not only eradicates Polish historical involvement in global development in the pre-1989 era, and state activities as an Eastern donor, but states that it was the end of the East–West divide that paved the way for Polish international involvement. While the history of development cooperation is rooted in Cold War history, and even the term 'Third World countries' would mean nothing without the rivalry of the 'First' and 'Second' world, in the process of shaping the contemporary Polish ODA apparatus this history has been erased. In true modern fashion, the past (of the PPR) became a non-existent foreign country. The international collaboration and positive input of the country into decolonisation and the growth of the Global South were not acknowledged, while the chronic economic crises in the country and its experiences as an aid recipient were emphasised. From that point, there was only the future to look forward to. The transition from being a recipient of aid (a poor country) to being a donor (a wealthy international player), from an undemocratic regime (in need of external political support) to a modern democracy (able to guide others in their transition efforts), became the dominant narrative.

Post-2004:
Officially a Donor, though an Emerging One...

In 1994, the Polish government officially applied for EU accession, and it seemed that its journey towards (Western) 'modernity' was close to completion. Joining the EU not only promised more money for structural adjustments but also meant further efforts and pressure to modernise Poland. Most importantly, it also officially marked the transition of Poland from recipient to donor nation. It was no longer appropriate for Poland to be defined as a 'developing country' in need of aid. Poland had to rebrand itself, and it effectively entered a new stage in the development challenge.

In fact, it was one of Brussels' conditions in the EU accession process that Poland create ODA institutions. However, it was never high on its priority list during the accession negotiations. As one MFA representative explained to me: 'We strongly negotiated farming and fishery issues, but on this topic there were no negotiations at all. … It was not part of the [public] accession debate'. According to her, it seemed to be a simple matter of signing and accepting some international agreements, such as the Cotonou Agreement (European Commission 2000), the Monterrey Consensus (United Nations 2003) and the United Nations Millennium Declaration together with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (UN General Assembly 2000). As she also noted, however, once this was done it became a serious matter, and the Ministry had to seriously start to think about how to implement all these agreements.

It was exactly at that time that Poland was defined as an 'emerging donor', despite its extensive experience as a donor between the 1950s and 1980s. The EU integration did not mean the opening of the discussion about creating a new approach to development that built on the open and frank discussion about lessons learned from the historical rivalry between the East and the West. Instead it was an exercise in which the history of the East was discounted and mutually forgotten. New member states had to 'follow the lead' of their Western counterparts, who now rebranded themselves as established donors. Countries like Poland were defined as new donors, even though, as Patty Gray (2015) argues, they were in fact simply recruited to join Western circles, emerging as *Western* donors, rather than donors (Drążkiewicz 2013).

In this new chapter in Polish developmental history, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was given a leading role. According to Czaplicka

(2007), the first official foreign assistance projects financed by the MFA were implemented in 1998. But the state strategy defining Polish aid activities was not defined until 2003 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003). In 2005, a special department in the MFA was established to coordinate Polish foreign assistance. In 2004, the Polish MFA had defined the priority partners for Polish aid. These were Afghanistan, Georgia, Iraq, Moldova and Vietnam. In the following years, the Palestinian Autonomy (2005), Ukraine and Belarus (2006) and Tanzania (2007) were added to this list. This might seem like a random collection of partners, but in fact they were all carefully selected and reflected the geopolitical reality of the period.

Polish involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq was legitimised by the Polish involvement in the War on Terror (Polish military troops were deployed in both countries). Both countries received the strongest financial support from Polish aid. Even though Poland had no capacity to provide aid to that region (with the exception of the Polish Humanitarian Action, no organisations were willing to undertake work there, and there were no proper partnerships established with local partners) and most of the projects were undertaken by special units attached to the Polish military – a practice highly criticised by the NGO sector – the MFA was keen on demonstrating its commitment to the War on Terror and presenting itself as a loyal ally of the USA.

Even though the early 2000s were shaped by the Millennium Development Goals emphasising the eradication of poverty and implicitly targeting Africa, Polish interests were clearly elsewhere. The largest amount of aid was directed towards Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Kucharczyk and Lovitt 2008; Petrova 2011, 2014).[5] In these regions, Poland was focusing on supporting the transition experience and democracy support – issues that were named in the Polish Strategy for Development as priority fields for action. In contrast with the collaborations fostered with the representatives of previous Soviet republics, Angola, Tanzania and Vietnam seemed to be rather nominal partners for Polish aid as they benefited from only a fraction of the resources that were allocated to other regions. Contrary to Western European trends, neither poverty alleviation nor the African trajectory were among the priorities for Polish development cooperation at that stage. For policy makers and aid professionals based in Western Europe, this choice was controversial. Used to associating development with Africa (especially sub-Saharan Africa),[6] they viewed Polish aid, with its prioritisation of neighbouring Eastern Europe, as some sort of aberration that required correction. Even

though no international guidelines or agreements on foreign aid (such as those of the OECD/DAC) would prevent Poland from focusing its efforts on Eastern Europe and democratisation, Western experts and policy makers were pressuring Poland to put more emphasis on Africa and poverty alleviation. When in 2008 I sat down with one of the UNDP staff members in his Warsaw office to discuss these issues, he admitted that conflict over aid trajectories creates a serious problem between Polish and other governments of the region and the European Commission:

> The European Commission, and other large donors from the EU, such as the UK, France or Scandinavian countries, state categorically that priority should be given to Africa: *and you too, as new donors, should also distribute most resources there*. But then these other countries in the region, say *No, we have our own political interests*. And also use this argument that we are at the beginning of that journey and it is easier for us to convince the society that we should help Ukraine or Belarus or Georgia. Because historically, economically, culturally Africa has almost no connection with Poland. And I think there is some truth to this argument. And if we pay attention to even UNDP indicators, we will notice that some of the Central Asian republics are at similar levels to some countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The fact that Poland was prioritising Eastern Europe over Africa was seen as proof that Poland is only learning how to become a 'real' donor, that policy makers in the country were somehow 'confused' about development and its 'real' meaning. In order to be included in DAC, and through that process join the exclusive club of 'established donors', Polish aid needed to 'evolve'.

Conclusions

Amid its EU accession struggles, Poland did what was expected from a 'deserving' EU candidate and followed the rules set up by previous colonial powers who insisted that development concerns poverty eradication and should focus on Africa (Holdar 1998; Mold 2007). The inclusion of Angola, Tanzania and Vietnam in Polish aid seemed like a way to maintain a pretence in front of Brussels. The choice of these three specific countries might seem random, yet it was reminiscent of the strong relationship that linked Poland to these countries during the Cold War era (Development Strategies and IDC 2003; Czaplicka 2007). Polish involvement in Tanzania and Angola was motivated by its support for the anti-colonial and socialist movements in these

countries. The relationship with Vietnam, on the other hand, was linked to the role that Poland (next to Canada and India) played in the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Indochina. Post-socialist Poland, preoccupied with its own situation, lost most of its political and economic relations with African and Asian countries. Now forced to engage in these distant continents as an EU donor, it resorted to old connections. But these ties were not sustainable. The new Poland – the Third Polish Republic – had its global political priorities set up in a completely different way than its predecessor, the PPR. While the PPR was interested in cooperation with the Global South (though that was certainly not the term the socialist state was using), the new post-socialist Poland had its priorities fixed on close neighbourhood policies and lost much of its interest in the global political economy. Soon after its EU accession, Vietnam and Tanzania were dropped from the list of priority countries (in 2007 and 2009 respectively). Poland closed down most of its embassies in Africa. Angola remained a nominal priority partner for Polish aid, but in reality cooperation with this country was of marginal importance and value.[7] Judging by the changing trajectory of Polish developmental cooperation, compared with the pre-1989 state of affairs, the interests of post-1989 Poland narrowed down rather than expanded. From an active international player, Poland became a regionally bounded stakeholder focused on its close neighbourhood.

Notes

1. My account of Janina Ochojska's first steps in the aid industry is based on several written accounts (interviews, articles and books) co-authored by Janina or those close to her (Ochojska and Bonowicz 2000; Steciuk and Szczygieł 2002; Gruca 2011).
2. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was an organisation comprising such countries as Poland, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, the German Democratic Republic, Cuba, Vietnam, Finland, Iraq, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Mexico, and operating between 1949 and 1991.
3. Krzysztof Stanowski is one of the key architects of Polish ODA structures. His first engagement with foreign aid was through the Education for Democracy Foundation. Between 2007 and 2010 he was undersecretary of state in the Ministry of National Education, pushing for the introduction of global education issues into the national curriculum. He was later appointed undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he was responsible for Polish ODA, and where he led the

introduction of the Polish Aid Act. This act established the Solidarity Fund, a state-funded NGO responsible for democracy promotion abroad. In 2012 he became the first president of that organisation.

4. Other factors mentioned are: c) a comprehensive approach to development cooperation issues and striving for coherence of the development policies of the respective states with other spheres of life; sustainable development – integrating economic growth, social advancement and protection of the environment – has come to be recognised as the proper direction of the further development of humanity; d) the responsible approach of developing countries to their own socio-economic development; and e) international actions against terrorism, elimination of which also requires an intensification of development aid by the international community.

5. This trend continued throughout the 2000s. For instance, in 2009, the Polish state's priority partners were countries such as Ukraine (approximately USD 2.874 million of assistance was provided via seventy-five projects), Georgia (USD 1.864 million – thirty-two projects), Belarus (USD 1 million – forty projects) and Moldova (USD 0.5 million – fifteen projects). Projects directed to these countries focused on civil society building, development and empowerment of the local administration, good governance, as well as agricultural development. Another country prioritised by Polish ODA was Afghanistan. This strong interest was motivated by Polish military involvement in the country, and most of the projects were implemented by the Provincial Reconstruction Team and Civil-Military Co-operation Support Team, affiliated with the Polish military contingent in Afghanistan (USD 4.8 million – forty-five projects). Another country named as a priority partner was the Palestinian Autonomy, the only country at that time with which Poland signed (in 2009) a framework agreement on development cooperation (USD 0.270 million – eight projects). Among African countries, only Angola held a place on the priority list for Polish aid (USD 0.314 million – four projects). Funds for other countries were grouped in joint financial pools which, in 2009, benefited from the following budget allocations: Western Balkans (USD 0.158 million – six projects), Africa (USD 2.048 million – forty-five projects), the Middle East (USD 47,000 – four projects), Asia (USD 0.717 million – twenty-six projects) and Latin America (USD 0.3 million – seventeen projects). This trend began to change in 2011 when some funding was allocated to North Africa – mostly for democracy support initiatives targeting communities and organisations contributing to the Arab Spring. The change was consolidated in 2012 when the Act on Polish Aid was established and new priority partners for Polish aid were defined. The new list consisted of members of the Eastern Partnership, countries of Eastern Africa, Central Asia, the Palestinian Autonomy and Afghanistan.

6. The prioritisation of Africa in the EU's approach to development in the mid 2000s is not entirely straightforward. On the one hand, international agreements concerned with development are signed not exclusively with African countries, but also with representatives of other regions. For

instance, the Cotonou Agreement (European Commission 2000) concerns the EU on one side and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States on the other. On the other hand, the Monterrey Consensus (United Nations 2003) and the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations 2000), among others, are UN agreements and as such concern all member states equally. However, as EuropeAid statistics show, the biggest proportion of aid is directed towards sub-Saharan Africa (39.3% in 2008; 34% in 2009). In addition, the European Consensus on Development states in point 5.1 (23): 'The EU has adopted a timetable for Member States to achieve 0.7% of GNI by 2015, with an intermediate collective target of 0.56% by 2010 (1), and calls on partners to follow this lead. These commitments should see annual EU aid double to over EUR 66 billion in 2010. … At least half of this increase in aid will be allocated to Africa, while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities in development assistance' (European Commission 2006).

7. There were only a few small projects implemented. Between 2004 and 2006, the MFA supported the St. Lucas Health Care Centre in Kifangondo, and financed the purchase of some basic HIV testing equipment for the medical centre operating in the region. In 2005 it financed an educational exchange between the Polish National Geological Institute and the Angolan geological institute. Angola remained a priority partner for Polish aid until 2010, but the biggest benefit it gained from playing that role was probably having its pre-1989 loans annulled.

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2

To the West through the East and Back

In the early 2000s, seeing minimal Polish interest in Africa, in their work towards the realisation of the MDGs, Western experts (who were evaluating Poland's suitability as an EU and OECD/DAC candidate) concluded that the country was not serious about its development commitment. In unofficial statements, but also in OECD/DAC reports, Poland was criticised for its instrumentalist approach to foreign aid, and using it as strategy in regional politics in Eastern Europe. The pressure was particularly felt in the Polish MFA, yet as one member of the Department of Development Cooperation explained to me, it was mostly implicit and applied in a typical EU fashion:

> Once every half a year … European ministers responsible for development issues in member states meet and then a kind of interrogation starts. It is not as straightforward as questioning: Poland what have you done, what have you not done? But the European Commission is obliged to collect data from each country on its ODA contributions, strategies, policies and their implementation. And Poland has to be honest, and confess …. Of course, nothing is said in a straightforward manner. Instead, what is said is, 'there are some countries that are still lagging behind…' and then everybody knows what it really means.

This specific confessional politics of shaming was intended to force Poland, together with other EU New Member States (NMS), to mimic the aid activities of the UK, France or Sweden. But was Polish involvement in Eastern Europe so different from British

involvement in Eastern Africa, or French involvement in Western Africa? Development aid is not a culturally neutral phenomenon and in every case it is rooted in a specific historical and contemporary political context. It is a reflection of country-specific domestic cultures of charity and moral economies; it resonates with the ways in which states and societies see themselves in the world, and construct their national identity. Consequently, each ODA project is unique as it is influenced by national settings that affect its modalities, trajectories and the discourses that validate them (Gardner and Lewis 2000; Dahl 2001; Williams 2011; Malkki 2015). The choice of the Polish state to get involved in Eastern Europe was political, but it was also a result of the long-standing relationship with the region and a reflection of the complex socio-cultural setting in the country. Even though it seemed like the state was only emerging as a donor, in fact the Ministry of Foreign Aid was not operating in a vacuum, but was following the lead of Polish NGOs that had been involved in international cooperation since the very early 1990s.

Assisting Familiar Strangers: Aid to Polish Minorities Abroad

A practice that paved the way for Polish involvement in previous Soviet republics, and which became instrumental in generating Polish interest in Eastern Europe, was assistance to 'Poles in the East'. These were programmes for the descendants of Polish families who during the Partitions and the Second World War were forcefully relocated to the Siberian territories of Russia, or who hoped to benefit from Russian expansion and voluntarily moved to the East in the hope of creating a new, better life for themselves. In the 1990s, the Polish state, as well as voluntary organisations and religious associations, initiated campaigns that aimed to reduce poverty and repatriate these families. This was also the experience of Janina Ochojska and her organisation. Only a year and a half after arriving in Sarajevo, Janina Ochojska organised convoys to Kokshetau and Karaganda in Kazakhstan with the aim of providing support to Polish minorities in the region. For several years she continued her work with Polish minorities in the previous Soviet republics, and families and individuals who were repatriated to Poland.

Such activities by Janina and PAH, as well as other similar organisations and state foundations (especially Wspólnota Polska – Polish Community), played an important role in linking foreign aid with

national politics, as well as directing Polish interests towards its Eastern neighbours. With time, the activities of many organisations shifted their focus from Polish minorities abroad to the countries in which they were residing. One illustration of how this mechanism worked, how aid to Poles in Eastern Europe became Polish aid, might be the case of Belarus. Until the mid 2000s, the Polish state had no official interest in assisting Belarusian civil society. Even though there were a few Polish organisations active in the country, their operations were not highly publicised. The events of 2005 changed this. In 2005, the Union of Poles in Belarus and the Belarusian government came into conflict: several Polish activists were arrested, the Union's activities were shut down by the Belarusian government and its newly elected leaders were not accredited by President Lukashenko. Elections had to be repeated. This time, the newly elected leaders were not acknowledged by the Polish government. The conflict received serious attention from the Polish media. According to the leaders of Polish organisations supporting democratisation of Belarus, this period was a breakthrough in garnering interest in the politics of Poland's Eastern neighbour. The country had been facing economic and political struggles for a while, but until this point there was no interest among Polish organisations or politicians in these matters. It was only in 2005, when the political struggles of Poles in Belarus hit the news, that questions about the limitations of the political system in that country were asked more often, encouraging political stakeholders and representatives of civil society to get involved. It was also a moment when the Polish government began to voice its objectives more loudly, and proceeded to support 'democratic changes' in its close neighbourhood. Democracy promotion became an important part of the discourse on foreign cooperation. Soon, the 'Polish angle' receded into the background, and weight shifted towards Belarusian society as a whole (rather than just the Polish minority within it). The new stated goal was a 'wakening' of Belarusian society, its empowerment and democratisation (Petrova 2011, 2014).

Connectivity: Historical Perspective

The original national narratives that linked Poland with previous Soviet republics through the presence of the Polish diaspora were gradually taking new shapes. Even when organisations began to move beyond working with Polish minorities and forged cooperation with other local stakeholders, national sentiments did not evaporate.

Instead, they took new shapes and forms. Often receding into the background, they became implicit undertones in the conversations I had with my informants about Polish involvement in Eastern Europe, often hard to break due to our shared national background. When I asked about the reasons for involvement, my question was seen as out of place, borderline stupid: why do I ask the obvious? 'It is *natural* for us, Poles, to get involved there', most of the aid workers answered when I asked why they got involved in Ukraine, Belarus or Kazakhstan. Significantly, most of them, instead of talking about themselves and their personal motivations, immediately moved to a grander scale, talking about *us*, about *Poland*, the *national* duty. Whether I like it or not, I have been socialised in the same national ideology, and indeed I knew (sensed) what they meant. My questions seemed provocative, or at least naive. It felt *natural*, so why do I ask? But if anthropology has taught us one thing, it is that for humans hardly anything is 'natural' (Friedman 1993). If people 'naturalise' their activity, it clearly holds great importance and meaning for them. What, therefore, is the significance behind those practices? What is their meaning?

One way of unpacking this 'natural' directing of Polish aid towards the East is through history and identity politics. Expressed through the notion of 'cultural proximity', Polish aid towards the East was justified by discourses on 'common culture' and history. Positioning themselves in relation to Western players, Polish aid workers often argued that due to these cultural commonalities linking Poland with other Slavic nations, Polish NGOs can simply better understand local realities, and therefore offer more appropriate projects than their Western counterparts. For instance, Krzysztof Stanowski, one of the founders of the Education for Democracy Foundation (which was originally set up to support reforms of the Polish education system), one of the architects of Polish ODA since his appointment in the MFA as the undersecretary responsible for foreign aid, explained to me that once American donors shifted their interests from Poland towards the East, and withdrew funding from Poland, they did not cut their ties with Poland but instead used the most successful Polish NGO leaders as brokers in their Eastern European activities. In the interview that I conducted with him in 2008, he expressed the opinion that early Polish aid activists operating in Eastern Europe were successful because they

> understood and valued local culture. They did not do what many other
> people coming from afar do, that is come and look at people saying: 'Oh

we can see that you are uneducated, that everything is wrong here, you do not even look like people, and now we will come and fix it all, and you will look like us'. That is not an attractive aid offer. Representatives of our foundation, they lived like local people, they worked like local people, they were building everything on local culture, that is on local experience, they strove to work in local languages, and that is why they were accepted as own folks.

Indeed, most Polish activists I met spoke Russian, and many of those working in Ukraine and Belarus spoke Ukrainian or Belarusian. As their work progressed, they became experts on regional politics and history. Significantly, at the earliest stages of their engagement they were able to present themselves to their Western partners, as equipped with a better understanding of Eastern European realities, not because of any expertise in the region but because of their 'Eastern' identity. That was their entry point to Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan. They were civic leaders and activists in Poland, and now they could expand their field of action to the nations with whom they shared cultural and historical proximity.

On the one hand, these specific notions about cultural identity were rooted in a very fresh past: communism was an oppressive regime but it was also effective in creating a feeling of unity, through active international cooperation (Bayly 2009; Loss 2013) but also through the shared experience of socialism. On the other hand, these notions also echoed popular ideologies promoting the existence of a 'Slavic nature' and identity. Born in the eighteenth century, initiated by Johann Herder, the idea of pan-Slavism postulated a utopian vision of a unified, monolithic Slavic nation. Herder's concept soon became fodder for the creation of Slavic nationalisms and messianism, and a search for a unifying myth of common Slavic beginnings that would bring all Slavic nations together (Janion 2006). While this movement faded away over time, it left behind nostalgic feelings about a shared Slavic identity, a unity of Slavs, which today occasionally resurface, shaping contemporary discourses on the region. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, they became implicitly visible in foreign aid practice. In this case, this unifying myth worked as a superstructure explaining aid in terms of the obligation to assist distant community members, first the Polish diaspora spread around the ex-Soviet republics, then other Slavs. It allowed the approximation of the distant, unrelatable stranger into a familiar Other. Effectively, it generated feelings of empathy and mobilised interest in otherwise foreign societies. This discourse also allowed formulation of foreign aid in terms of duty. It became the Polish responsibility, a civic responsibility, to assist not

only members of one's own Slavic community, but those who were often overlooked by the Western community, left without support, or who could not enjoy effective assistance from Western donors as the 'cultural barrier' would prevent effective cooperation.

While the narrative of 'cultural proximity' was used as a blanket statement by those who worked to the East of Poland, it was mobilised particularly by activists involved in Ukraine and Belarus. In these instances, the trajectory of Polish aid was perceived as 'natural' in a historical sense as well, as it reflected the pre-1945 history, when the western territories of Ukraine and Belarus were part of the Polish state (and defined as *Kresy*). This sentiment was especially visible during the Orange Revolution of 2004/2005, and the aid initiatives that followed. For most aid practitioners with whom I talked, a common history was the glue that somehow kept different nations in this region together, making them responsible for each other. This was the case, for example, with a young academic I met in 2005, during my research project on the Polish post-gentry, who told me about his work as an independent observer of the Ukrainian presidential elections. He told me how, in the winter of 2004, he went to Kiev to demonstrate his support for the Orange Revolution. He described this trip as a 'pilgrimage', a journey of return to his roots. He was the descendant of an old prominent aristocratic family, which before the Second World War owned vast lands in Western Ukraine, and held offices of political prominence. His interest in Ukraine was clearly driven by his familial connection; he saw it as a 'heritage' left to him by his distant ancestors who lived on this land. The fact that his family held a prominent position in both Ukrainian and Polish history created a connection that transcended personal and national levels of engagement. I also had a chance to talk to his mother about this issue. She was born in Western Ukraine, and as a result of the Second World War she relocated to Warsaw. As she told me, she always wanted to go back, but until 1989 it was impossible. Until Ukraine was free from dependence on the USSR, she refused to go and see the place of her origin:

> I went to Ukraine when it was free. I didn't want to go earlier. … I wanted to go to a Lviv which has its head raised high and not pushed into the mud … I went to Lviv when the blue-yellow flag was hanging on its guildhall, as it should be. I didn't want to see a red flag at the Lvivian guildhall. I really didn't want that.

Like her son, she was talking about this trip as a 'pilgrimage' not only to visit the land of her parents but to see 'her' land, her 'second

motherland'. Her trip was a personal journey but, as her son told me, it allowed her to restore old connections and was the beginning of their new involvement in the region. The family set up a foundation, initiated some small local projects focusing predominantly on education initiatives, and when Polish aid funding became available from the state, they applied for grants. The organisation did not turn out to be highly successful – it organised only a few minor conferences – but its story demonstrates well how some of the earliest aid activities were born at the bottom-up level, sometimes out of old class privilege, sometimes out of complicated family histories connecting people across borders and regions, sometimes from cross-border cooperation, and often from national sentiments and a hope that new partnerships with old neighbours could be forged and that a new history, overshadowing the old complicated relationships, could be written.

Most aid workers I met were extremely knowledgeable and aware of the complexity of the relationship that joined Poland and Ukraine. They had vast historical knowledge of the nineteenth-century imbalance of political, economic and symbolic power, Ukrainian emancipation struggles and military conflicts. But at the same time the relatively strong public support for their work did not have this kind of sophistication and was based on much simpler national ideologies that triggered feelings of connectivity and responsibility for the fate of Eastern neighbours, which allowed for individual Polish aid initiatives to be viewed as a national duty. As various scholars have shown (Gella 1989; Janion 2006; Bakuła 2007; Zarycki 2014), Polish national ideology is strongly rooted in nostalgia for *Kresy*, or a far gone past, when Poland was powerful and spread its land 'from sea to sea'; the Poland which, united with Lithuania (though in common discourse the role of the second country is often overlooked), ruled over contemporary Ukrainian and Belarusian lands; Poland in which 'Lviv was Polish, ours, and so was Grodno'. All these sentiments are omnipresent in Polish national ideology and it would be naive to believe that Polish aid has been immune to their influences. In fact, it has benefited from them, as to large extent they made public support for its emergence possible.

At a time when the prevailing narrative in Poland was that of economic hardship and entitlement to foreign funds, the idea that Poland was rich enough to support others, that Poland should *give* rather than *take*, seemed controversial. In 2004, only 4 per cent of those who supported the idea that Poland should provide international aid agreed with the statement that it should do so because it is a wealthy

country. At the same time, most of those who were against Polish involvement in international aid argued that Poland should prioritise its own hardships (TNS OBOP 2006). The national ideology helped to overcome these perceptions. The merging of national sentiments with the otherwise problematic idea of foreign aid seemed *natural.* Within this framework, Polish aid, especially its Eastern European trajectory, did not seem controversial. Instead, it became naturalised as a simple extension of the state history and national spirit.

The way in which these national discourses interplayed with aid discourses at the time of Polish emergence as a donor is most clearly visible in the period of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004/2005. The revolution received great attention and support in Poland, and the events of that time heavily contributed to the growing interest among Polish NGOs and the state in forging new collaborations. There had been strong cooperation between the Polish and Ukrainian states and civil society sectors since the 1990s. Yet the new funding opportunities that ODA provided, coupled with the consolidation of the NGO sector in Poland, now ready to take on new challenges abroad, coincided with a publicly visible 'crisis' in the country, which 'needed' support for its democratic transition. This paved the way for the previous bottom-up, small-scale, regional cooperation to become an international aid issue. The merging of these dynamics with a national ideology not only allowed for growth in public support for Polish involvement in Ukraine, but also made it a Polish aid matter, a national matter.

The ways in which the media portrayed the conflict in Ukraine, and the ways in which people in Poland showed support and engaged with it, demonstrate well how strong the linkages were between national ideologies and foreign assistance in Poland at that time. In its coverage of the events in Ukraine, the media clearly emphasised the 'Polish angle'. For instance, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (*GW*) would publish articles discussing the special bond between Ukrainian protestors and the Polish visitors who joined them in solidarity. According to these stories, Ukrainians who had gathered in Maidan Square (Independence Square) welcomed Polish supporters in the Polish language with tears in their eyes, supposedly recalling pre-war times with fondness. Among Ukrainian flags on the square, Polish ones were also waving. According to *GW*, when Polish members of the European Parliament spoke to the gathered crowd, they were welcomed with great enthusiasm and shouts of 'Ukraine and Poland for ever!' (Radzinowicz and Wojciechowski 2004a). *GW* also used such titles as 'Wspólna Sprawa: Kijów – Warszawa' [A common issue:

Kiev – Warsaw] (Krzyżaniak-Gumowska 2004). Poland and Ukraine were presented as two nations living in harmony, almost as one. This notion of closeness was further strengthened through simplifying descriptions of Ukraine, which was divided into Western and Eastern sections with the former supporting 'civilised reforms and democracy' while the latter was the 'uncivilised, drunken, aggressive East' manipulated by Russia, an enemy of change. The West was where Poland used to be, the East remained wild. Even though political struggles visible in Maidan were internal Ukrainian matters, in Poland they were discussed almost as a homecoming. The media was propagating an image in which Poles were a nation welcomed and needed in Ukraine. These notions were particularly effective in mobilising public support in Polish cities for the Ukrainian revolution: marches and demonstrations were organised to express support. To manifest their solidarity with an Eastern neighbour, people in major Polish towns wore orange clothes or orange awareness ribbons. In Warsaw, a tent was set up by the Ukrainian embassy to organise vigils in support of the demonstrators in Maidan Square. It was an image of harmony and solidarity.

However, it was also an image that put forward an idealised vision of two unified nations and silenced those parts of their history that pointed to the national and class oppression of Ukrainians by the ruling classes. When *GW* titled one of its pro-Ukrainian articles by citing (in Ukrainian) the Ukrainian national anthem – 'Szcze Ne Wmerła Ukraina' [Ukraine's glory has not perished] – at the same time it left unsaid the following lines: 'We'll stand together for freedom, from the Sian to the Don / We will not allow others to rule in our motherland', describing Ukrainian struggle for sovereignty and independence from neighbouring states, including the Polish one. Although the anthem was written in the nineteenth century, conflicts have not vanished, and many issues continue to divide nations rather than bring them together.[1] Still, at this earliest stage of Poland's emergence as a donor, the common narrative in Poland was celebrating brotherhood, ignoring the fact that from a Ukrainian perspective Polish involvement could be viewed not only as a positive act of solidarity but also as an echo of patronising and colonising attitudes.[2]

Nevertheless, nationalistic narratives were widespread and went hand in hand with the incubating discourses on Polish aid. The timings of conflicts over Polish organisations in Belarus (2005), as well as the Maidan protests in Ukraine (2004/2005) and the Jeans Revolution in Belarus (2006) – all of which received strong attention

and support in Poland – coincided with Polish EU accession and consequently the establishment of the Polish ODA apparatus in the mid 2000s. It was at this time that ODA matters entered parliamentary debate, with representatives of the MFA requesting budget allocations for foreign aid. The time for 'thinking' and 'debating' how to structure, fund and implement ODA had come. It turned out that political support for foreign aid was almost non-existent, but Poland had signed international agreements and there was no way of escaping its 'international obligations'. According to Filip Kaczmarek, Polish politician and EU parliamentarian, with whom I discussed these issues, the only instance in which Polish members of parliament could accept the notion of foreign aid was when it was linked to activities in Eastern Europe. As he explained to me, what Poland had been doing in Ukraine or Belarus was simply neighbourhood policy, 'but due to political reasons, those two issues got merged, so that they could be accepted in parliament'. While it was almost impossible to convince MPs to direct aid to Tanzania or Angola, 'it was easier to speak about supporting freedom and democracy in Belarus or Ukraine. It was more acceptable. … It was [all] Eastern Bloc, and there was some feeling that it was a common block, that we were in it together, and now these countries were striving for freedom, and this freedom is fragile and at risk – as became evident in the Russian-Georgian War. So [these countries] need support. In that regard, from the perspective of a Polish MP or an average citizen, aid to Angola or Tanzania is a pure abstraction'. In this context it is clear how decisive national interests as well as national ideologies became for directing Polish aid towards the East. As such, they became an important factor influencing the trajectory of Polish ODA and the decision to focus the efforts of the Polish aid industry on its close neighbourhood. In these circumstances, and in the context of the shared history, it seemed only 'natural' that Poland become actively involved in the region. Helping in Ukraine and Belarus was not about helping distant strangers, but assisting familiar Others.

Proximity: Similarity of Experiences

Above I explained some of the mechanisms leading to the choice of geographical priorities for Polish aid and the role that national history and nationalism played in those processes. But how can we understand the choice of the modalities and topical priorities

of Polish aid? Why do Polish stakeholders prioritise activities promoting socio-political transformation rather than economic growth? Why do they focus on the transitioning experience and democracy promotion rather than eradication of poverty? I talked about these issues with many activists, and most of the stories I heard resembled that told by Krzysztof Stanowski in which he explained why the teachers' organisation which he had helped establish to foster educational reforms in Poland moved its activities abroad and broadened its scope of activities from education to civil society building and democracy promotion:

> It was maybe 1991, maybe 1992 and we understood that we are not chosen by God, it is not [only] Poles who are entitled to a free market, human rights … [We understood] that there are people elsewhere who would also like to have a right to say what their house will look like, what their school should be like, and that we have no right to tell them 'It's your problem', especially when we have experienced so much [international] solidarity, when we used to fight for exactly the same thing, when we used to say exactly the same thing: that we want to have the ability to influence our reality. That is why [we] started to work in Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, in Caucasus, Central Asia and Mongolia.

These sentiments were transgenerational. For instance, Tomasz, born in 1978, saw his work in Belarus as a result of growing up in a specific historical moment, and as he semi-jokingly told me: 'I grew up in socialist Poland. Since early childhood I was subjected to social-sensitivity propaganda, which, I have to admit, in my case landed on very fertile ground'. But even much younger activists, those born in the mid or late 1980s, would also use the Polish past to explain their interest in helping distant strangers. In 2007, talking about his involvement in Belarus, one young undergraduate student, Stefan, told me:

> We know how it is to stand in a long queue for a piece of meat; to have nothing; to have to apply for a [permission to get] a passport. We know how it is, we went through all of that, so we understand the situation they are in, we can relate to it.

This kind of reasoning was frequently present in stories about foreign assistance to Eastern Europe. Once again, 'proximity' provided the basis for foreign interventionism. Yet this time it was a proximity of experiences. Like Stefan, many people could relate to the hardships of an economic crisis, but as he himself admitted, the real mobilising force was the ability to relate to a political struggle. The memory

of the not-so-distant fight for democracy in Poland – oppression, demonstrations, lack of freedom and economic hardships – was essential in shaping Polish ODA. Of course, Poland is not unique in democracy promotion. Many stakeholders across the world engage with it. But for Polish aid workers, the difference separating them from others was simple: while Western donors were talking the talk, they knew what it meant to walk the walk. Their commitment to the struggle for democracy, the connection between their past experiences in Poland and new international engagements, was present in the modalities of aid that were popular among NGOs and promoted by Polish aid. Since Poland's democratic transition had been strongly attributed to the ability of the Polish opposition movement to create a free, independent and underground media, many projects abroad now focused on these issues, and many Polish NGOs focused specifically on supporting independent and local media in Belarus, Ukraine or Georgia.[3] A favourite project of Polish politicians became Belsat TV, a satellite television channel aimed at Belarus, funded predominantly through ODA, broadcasting from Poland and envisioned as an alternative to national state-run media outlets. Building on the history of the Polish transition movement and the positive experience of many opposition and social leaders who received aid from such bodies as the American National Endowment for Democracy, when deciding structural arrangements for Polish ODA, the MFA decided to prioritise democracy support and to fulfil that goal by setting up the Solidarity Fund, a GONGO dedicated to democracy promotion. At the same time, the state rejected the idea of creating a separate 'development and humanitarian aid' agency (a body that would be analogous to British DFID). Moreover, the Polish government, during its EU presidency, successfully pushed forward analogous ideas at the EU forum, which led to the establishment of the European Endowment of Democracy.

Like Western democracy promotion, the Polish version was based on ideology, but it was also built on the very particular personal experiences of aid workers who lived under the oppressive regime, and who often risked their own freedom by involvement in illegal opposition movements. Krzysztof Stanowski, Janina Ochojska, Pawel Kazanecki, Jacek Michałowski, all of them contributed greatly to the foundation and shaping of Polish aid. All of them (in various capacities) took their first steps in social activism as members of organisations that were countering the communist regime. They knew what it meant to live without democracy and to fight for it, to experience the fear, the anxiety, the restricted agency. But they also

experienced the thrill and excitement of change, the blissful joy that brought hope for a better future, contributing to change. They now wished for the same positive change for others. Many aid workers saw their involvement in foreign aid as an obligation: to pay back the debt incurred while Poland itself was undergoing political transformation. They felt it was their obligation to support other countries in their struggles. They felt obliged to foster positive international relations, to make a change not only at home but also in the world. Consequently, their political involvement in foreign issues was an extension of their early political activism in their home country.

But the world of Polish organisations operating to the East of Poland was not exclusive to ex-Solidarity activists. It included professionals active in many fields (media, education, housing, child protection services, health care and so on). They were not simply specialising in political activism, or 'aid', but as experts in their own domains with a strong political conscience they were now using the expertise that they had gained at home to support democratic changes abroad. Among them were journalists who contributed to the growth of local media in Poland and were now interested in sharing their knowledge and expertise with their Eastern neighbours; or educators – teachers, school leaders – who since the 1990s had been pushing forward reforms in the Polish education system and were now eager to support their partners in Eastern Europe in analogous efforts.

However, as the aid industry was growing, a new cohort of aid workers was born. These were mostly young people, born in the 1980s and 1990s, for whom being an aid worker became a primary identification. In the field of democracy promotion, an interesting place was held by the sons and daughters of Solidarity activists. They grew up in households in which political discussions and activism were a daily reality. They watched their parents' secret meetings with other activists, listened to their debates, watched them plan protest actions, and often witnessed their arrests and numerous house searches. Among this cohort was Stefan, a student already mentioned, who set up an organisation supporting democratic activism in Belarus. We talked about his motivation for the work, and the conversation soon turned to discussion of the 'family values' that he brought from home and the role that his father played in the Worker's Defence Committee:

> Of course our parents had an amazing past, building something as important as democracy, but we have no complex, we can only be proud. It can

> only be an inspiration for us. It does influence us, without doubt. But who would not be influenced if they had been raised in this atmosphere, if 'bibuła' [illegal oppositional press] was transported in their pram?

For people like Stefan, political activism and interest in external democracy support was part of a family heritage. But Stefan's world view was not unique; it was in line with the wider national milieu – and that is why it was so effective. The events in Ukraine and Belarus triggered emotional responses because they brought back memories of pivotal moments in Polish history: the struggle for independence, the hardship of the communist era, the resistance of the Solidarity movement. These moments shaped Polish identity around values of democracy, sovereignty, citizen engagement and freedom. The events taking place abroad generated public interest in Poland because they were 'close to home', not in geographical terms, but symbolically. They resonated with historical events that still today continue to inform the national identity and sense of belonging. Consequently, Polish involvement abroad was as much about assisting distant strangers as about defining oneself. The Ukrainian revolutions and Polish involvement in those events served for Polish audiences as a projection of their own past and future at the same time: they became a sort of commemorative event, celebrating the power of the old Solidarity movement and the manifestation of the current regional ambitions of the new, post-socialist state.

The linkage between Poland of the 1980s and Ukraine of 2004 and 2014 was achieved through the employment of Solidarity symbols. After the outbreak of the Orange Revolution, the slogan 'Solidarni z Ukrainą' [Solidarity with Ukraine] gained immediate popularity as it echoed a memory of the opposition movement of the 1980s. *Solidarność* – as a term, but also as a logotype with its distinctive font and style – was incorporated in most campaigns calling for democratisation of Belarus and Ukraine. When the demonstrations and vigils of support were organised across the country, they incorporated these symbols, as well as the songs of Jacek Kaczmarski, a bard of the Solidarity movement. Finally, the connection was made through the involvement of Solidarity leaders actively expressing their support for the events in Ukraine and Belarus in traditional and social media, but also travelling to Maidan and making public appearances there. Among them was Lech Wałęsa, along with many other active or retired politicians. 'I believe that you will succeed just like we did in the time of Solidarity', said ex-prime minister of Poland Jerzy Buzek to crowds gathered in Kiev during the Orange Revolution

(Radzinowicz and Wojciechowski 2004a, 2004b). Particularly telling is the way in which even the late Jacek Kuroń – the Ukraine-born leader of Solidarność – got incorporated into the 2004 campaigns. His grave in Warsaw was decorated with oranges and orange ribbons during the first Maidan revolution. In all these symbolic, linguistic and material ways, people in Poland were making a clear connection between events in Ukraine and the past of their own country. Through the employment of these symbols, distant strangers from abroad were once again rendered into familiar proxies. Foreign aid was becoming a national issue.

Even though the applied symbolism referenced the Solidarity movement, it was effective because it resonated with broader traits of Polish national identity, which go beyond Solidarność, and have their roots in more distant history. Since the eighteenth-century Partitions, national ideology had pushed ideas that connected the idea of Poland with notions of sacrifice and victimhood. These ideologies propagated notions that emphasised conflicts between Poland and its neighbours, and visions of a molested Poland constantly under attack. In these notions, Poland was simultaneously a victim and a hero: it appeared as 'Polonia-Saviour', prepared to sacrifice its innocent blood in the name of freedom (Janion 2006: ch. 7). The ways in which these imaginaries and narratives resonated with the public became obvious to me when, during my fieldwork in the MFA, a colleague showed me an image that was sent to the MFA for a competition to design a Polish aid logo. It was not a winning project, but it was an informative signal of how aid was perceived by the public, and how effective national ideologies had been in shaping this image. The logo depicted Hussar Wings – wings worn by members of the Polish cavalry between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries – and was associated with the golden age of the Polish army, defeating enemies on the battlefields of Chocim (1621), Lviv (1675), Vienna (1683) and many others. It was an image that merged history and the present, and which married national ideologies with aid discourses. Born in the nineteenth century, this concept of Poland as 'Saviour of the Nations', or Polish messianism, was clearly present in this logo, just as it was often seemingly weaved into the narratives about Poland's new mission to assist distant strangers. In an interesting way, this specific image (even if exaggerated, and not appreciated by aid workers who chose another design for the Polish aid logo) demonstrates well how important national ideology has been in shaping Poland's emergence as an international donor, a supporter of democracy promotion, a player ready to continue fighting 'For Our Freedom and Yours'.[4]

A Russian Elephant in the Room

Why are some freedoms worth fighting for, and others are not? If the fight for global democracy is such a strong trait in Polish history and identity, why does it fail to mobilise support for countries struggling with oppressive regimes in Africa or Latin America? I tried to understand this issue while talking to Stefan (a student activist already mentioned). I asked, trying to understand the choices made by my interlocutor:

> But what about countries in Africa, which go through wars, where people are dying every day, like in South Sudan? After all, people here [in Poland] still remember the Second World War, we have seen genocide in our own backyard. So why, when you see two pictures on the news, one from Sudan and one from Belarus, are you moved by the latter?

Tomek responded:

> But Sudan is an abstraction for us! Who knows anything about Sudan? But Belarus is something we can understand, it is near, we can relate to it.

Stefan's statement strongly echoed the narratives justifying Polish involvement in its Eastern neighbourhood through discourses of cultural proximity, similarity of experiences and national identity. Still, in this, and many other similar conversations I conducted, it seemed there was something left out, a topic no one wanted to discuss explicitly, but which seemed to be implicit in almost every conversation. There was an elephant in the room, and it was called Russia.

I have already described the very first aid initiative organised by Janina Ochojska – a humanitarian convoy to besieged Sarajevo. But the first permanent mission set up by Ochojska's organisation was in Chechnya. The story of how the PAH got involved in the region is particularly revealing. According to one of the ex-PAH volunteers who recounted this story to me, the PAH had organised its first humanitarian convoy to Chechnya in 1995, but the decision to get involved in the Russian-Chechen conflict on a longer-term basis was not an obvious one for the organisational leaders. However, as soon as the second Russian offensive began in October 1999, the PAH became flooded with goods and donations that people delivered to the NGO's offices. There was no call for assistance; PAH leaders did not ask for donations or announce any fundraising initiative in the media. Still, people were dropping random goods at PAH offices across the country, making it clear that they were specifically

interested in helping people in Grozny. As one of the organisational leaders told me, at the beginning, the organisation was not even certain if they should get involved in this conflict, but the 'pressure' from society and expectations that the NGO would organise aid forced a decision.

The interest in the Chechen war was unprecedented. The conflict in Kosovo was in full swing at the time, and the PAH was active there as well. In a very simplified manner, the two conflicts could be seen as similar, with two predominantly Muslim nations fighting for independence from powerful, undemocratic regimes. But it was distant Caucasus, rather than the nearby Balkans, that got people's attention and mobilised aid donations. Visibly embarrassed, a PAH worker responsible for the Chechen mission suggested that the outpouring of support for Chechnya simply reflected the strong hatred towards its opponent, Russia. Although she was visibly ashamed of this fact, and it was clear that she did not share those feelings, it was evident to her that a factor playing in favour of the Chechens was national antagonism towards Russia, and sympathy for separatist efforts from this powerful state.

The animosity between Poland and Russia has a long history (Davies 1982; Epsztein 2000). The negative feelings shared by so many Poles towards their powerful Eastern neighbour are based on historical experiences of wars and conflicts. The Partitions, nineteenth-century uprisings, the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921), the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet invasion of 1939, the Katyń massacre, the Yalta Conference and Soviet domination since 1945 constitute the core of Polish national memory and continue to inform national identity. It is an identity built on the one hand around the notion of a suffering, colonised nation, and on the other a nation that actively fought for its freedom.

According to some researchers, the constant threat to Polish sovereignty, prolonged periods of forced incorporation into foreign empires and the positioning of the country at the lower end of European hierarchies of power make the country's condition similar to that of post-colonial nations (Carey and Raciborski 2004; Jill 2009; Mayblin, Piekut, and Valentine 2014). Clare Cavanagh (2004), a Slavist and literary critic, argues that this specific condition led to the formation of a Polish 'postcolonial sensibility' which allows Polish artists to grasp the realities of life under colonial and foreign rule outside of their own country. In the opening paragraph of her article, she quotes a passage from *The Captive Mind* by Czesław Miłosz in which he describes the outrage experienced on reading sixteenth-century chronicles of

the South American conquest. The indignation is palpable and comes from his own experience as a colonised subject (Cavanagh 2004: 83). It is this very experience of oppressive force that opens the door for better understanding of people in a similar condition, empathy and feelings of solidarity. Yet what inspires poets to write their lyrics might for others be a motivation to react by engaging in political and social activism, in foreign aid.

This explains why support for Chechens fighting against Russia, Belarusians rising against Lukashenko's regime, or Ukrainians demonstrating for democratisation of their country was so strong. At the same time, it is clear that the sympathy for colonised nations is selective. It mobilises feelings of empathy only towards a few specific nations (for instance Chechens, but not Southern Sudanese). It seems that what really matters is not only solidarity with colonised nations, but also a camaraderie *against* specific colonisers.

The experience of struggle for national sovereignty over the last two hundred years has left many Poles with ambivalent feelings towards Russia. Russia is usually perceived as a threat, as an aggressor. It is constantly orientalised and described as an uncivilised, unmodern, non-democratic, corrupt country. According to Janion (2006), this orientalisation of Russia has a significant function in constructing Polish identity, and is essential for the de-orientalisation of Poland itself. As Janion points out, created during the Partitions and enforced in the 1920s, auto-identification of Poland as a nation that has to fight against 'barbaric Asia', the East, that is, 'Moskal', is still valid today. Orientalised by the West (Buchowski 2006; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012) and struggling with its dubious identification as neither East nor West, through orientalising Russia, Poland can de-orientalise itself by pushing the dividing border further to the east. Poland is no longer located in Eastern Europe, but is now in Central Europe. A moral, political and cultural division is created. This becomes particularly transparent in the case of Polish involvement in the previous Soviet republics. It allows Polish identity to be redefined and the image of an unstable country to be shed, substituting it with the notion of a mature democracy, a state capable of assisting others in their own political struggles.

Becoming a Donor

It is in this context, within this specific socio-cultural framework, that Poland's emergence as a (Western EU) donor was taking place

in the early 2000s. In the earliest years, the role that was envisioned for Poland by decision makers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was that of a 'bigger brother' guiding others in their passage to democracy and modernity. It was not simply a reflection of the state's political strategising, but went hand in hand with the practices of NGOs already active in the field. Most importantly, it resonated with Polish national nostalgia, identities and history. It is in these contexts that the new discourse on Polish aid emerged, the one which argued that due to the unique history and geopolitical positioning between the West and the East, Poland was not only obliged but predestined to contribute to the democratisation of its Eastern neighbours. As President Lech Kaczyński put it, it was a country that championed democracy and economic growth, whose experiences of 'shedding a totalitarian regime and taking up the task of modernising the country affords us [in Poland] a special comprehension of the needs of countries that follow a similar path and the essence of their transition' (Kaczyński 2006). Finally, Poland was able to present itself as a self-sufficient country, a significant player in the world system: 'We are committed to efforts to extend the area of democracy and freedom around the world. Today Poland is a rapidly developing country. We are turning into a country that is able to donate to the global community, much to our satisfaction' (Kaczyński 2006). Polish involvement in foreign aid was clearly very strongly connected to regional history and politics. It was a cultural phenomenon which, in the case of aid to Eastern Europe, was effective in mobilising public support because it was rooted in and reinforced national identity. The involvement in the democratisation of its Eastern neighbours struck a chord with general audiences, politicians and social activists because it resonated with the ideas they had about themselves as citizens of Poland and of the world.

Conclusion

It is amid and against this nationalistic discourse, and the complicated history of Poland's struggle with its own development, that supporters of aid to Africa had to operate. It is this context that EU experts, who were surprised and dissatisfied with Poland's lack of interest in Africa and its growing involvement in Eastern Europe, missed. As demonstrated above, contrary to what they suggested, Poland was not confused about development aid. While its choices were not 'natural', as Polish aid activists would suggest, they were

rational, reflecting the socio-cultural milieu of the late 1990s and mid 2000s. In fact, Poland did exactly what other, Western players did, shaping its own aid strategies, narratives and institutions in a way that resonated with national ideologies and the geopolitical environment of the era in which ODA was born.

But it does not mean that the Polish aid industry and society were univocal about these issues. Around the 2000s, a new cohort of aid workers emerged whose interest lay outside of Eastern Europe and who called for Polish involvement in Africa. Just like in the 1990s, the lead this time was taken by Janina Ochojska, who since her first mission to Sarajevo had been interested in expanding the scope of her organisation. As we saw above, the Polish Humanitarian Action and its leader actively contributed to the nationalisation of Polish aid (through its first initiatives targeting Polish minorities in previous Soviet republics, and through strong support for Chechnya). Paradoxically, when in the mid 2000s the organisation was ready to embark on a new developmental mission in Africa, it had to challenge the narratives that had made their origin possible in the first place. Their struggle to counter these narratives, to shift interest from Eastern Europe to Africa, and to establish new moral economies of aid is a topic of the following chapters.

Notes

1. These include conflicts over the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Banderites and their anti-Polish stand; over the military action Operation Vistula in 1947, which resulted in the killing and resettlement of many Ukrainians living in Poland; and over the conflict regarding the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lviv.

2. Indeed, when the second Maidan – Euromaidan – took place in the winter of 2013–2014, the atmosphere was significantly different. Many Polish social activists and politicians again travelled to Kiev to express support, and NGOs and the government provided both financial and in-kind assistance. However, because the protests incorporated symbols and slogans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), the national ideology that helped to mobilise support in 2005 this time became extremely problematic and could not be utilised. In these events, it becomes undeniable that the relations linking Poland and Ukraine are not as straightforward as they seemed in 2005, and consequently Polish aid to the country has also begun to be seen as a more problematic issue, requiring some reconceptualisation.

3. Examples include: Stowarzyszenie Gazet Lokalnych (Association of Local Newspapers), Fundacja Edukacja dla Demokracji (Education

for Democracy Foundation), Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Wschód (Democratic Association: East), the East European Democratic Centre and many others.

4. 'For Our Freedom and Yours' is a slogan that appeared for the first time at the 1831 patriotic demonstration commemorating the Decembrists. The slogan was meant to emphasise the fact that the demonstrations were not aimed at Russians, but at the Tsarist regime, and if successful, Russians would also benefit from freedom. The slogan became very popular and has since been used on Polish military standards. Today it is considered an unofficial Polish motto.

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3

Global Education

Discovering Africa for Polish Aid

In the 1990s the transition from aid recipient to donor seemed very simple. The level of public support for organisations working in Bosnia, Kazakhstan or Chechnya was encouraging. In spite of the ongoing economic struggles in the country, many people were willing to support foreign aid, in particular humanitarian assistance. However, the new organisations that started to emerge in the early 2000s, with a hope of working on development issues in Global South, did not enjoy such a support. As long as foreign aid was linked to nationalistic ideology (as in the case of the Polish presence in Ukraine, Belarus or Chechnya), the mobilisation of public support was not such a problem. In comparison, the aid to Africa was met with relative silence. Barely anyone cared, neither the society nor the politicians. Even other NGO leaders, those involved in Eastern Europe (as we saw in the previous chapter), were sceptical about their colleagues' involvement in Africa. Occasionally, such aid initiatives would also provoke racist, derogatory and discriminatory notions. Around that time, PAH also started to consider moving into new ventures in Global South, prompting some members of the public to ask: 'Why should we help some Black people, if we have similar problems in Poland?'[1] Such negative attitudes had in fact accompanied Polish NGOs working in Africa from their inception. They were an important part of their organisational beginnings, a force against which the organisations had to work, but to some extent they were also a driving force for organisational members, who wanted to foster change not only abroad but also in Poland.

It became the aid industry's mission to change these attitudes. Aid workers believed that their ability to work in Africa depended heavily on public support and the ability to organise effective fundraising campaigns. They also realised that the current model of operating – based on public collections – would not provide enough resources to take up new challenges in African territories. They needed external funding from the corporate world, but they also began to look for grants from various state and international donors. The birth of the Department of Development Cooperation in the MFA in 2004 came at just the right time. But what was necessary, was to convince decision makers, state elites, that Poland needed to provide funds not only for Eastern Europe but also for aid to African countries. Grupa Zagranica, an NGO platform for organisations operating abroad, took a leading role in this endeavour. However, for all these NGOs, becoming a donor in Africa was not only about securing resources. It was about changing moral discourses. It was about making change at home, creating a new society that was less ethnocentric and cared more about global issues. It was about creating a coalition of like-minded people, other small organisations and individuals, and collectively making a deliberate effort to constitute a more satisfying culture, a culture of giving and caring about distant strangers. This movement required a certain dedication and passion, a strong belief in the calling, a sort of collective effervescence that would open the possibility of a shift in the moral economy of aid (Olaveson 2001). It required rendering distant strangers, those 'abstract' African societies, into familiar Others, but also creating a 'development gaze' (Escobar 1988, 1995) and 'humanitarian reason' capable of seeing, conceptualising and responding to human suffering. This plan required a new form of education: global education. In this chapter I examine the strategies taken up by the MFA and NGOs to achieve these goals.

Connecting Aid Chain Links

In one of my first articles on foreign aid, I argued that Poland's emergence as a donor can be explained through gift theory (Drążkiewicz 2013). Polish aid activities were an attempt to pay back the debt incurred while the country was on the receiving end of the aid chain. Since the 2000s, Poland no longer qualified as an aid recipient, but it could not simply leave the chain. As described by Marcel Mauss (2002), the obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate also applied in the case of foreign aid. Poland had no choice but to continue

participating in the global circle of donors and recipients. Through redefining Eastern Europe as in need of aid, Poland could successfully rebrand itself and switch positions in the chain. But as some Polish stakeholders became interested in aiding Africa, it became very clear that the global circle of obligation to give aid had its limits. The 'global village' turned out to be more of a village than a globe, with people much more willing to support familiar proxies, who even if located in distant Caucasus, at least on some social, cultural or political level were relatable. The stranger in besieged Sarajevo was in fact a familiar Slav; the distant Chechen fighting against the Russian army echoed Poland's own nationalistic ideology and anti-Russian sentiments; the poor in Kazakhstan were in fact kin from Poland. Such associations were effective in mobilising support for distant strangers, but in the case of African countries they were particularly difficult to make. Most of the aid workers I met complained that for Poles Africa was so distant, so irrelevant, that it was impossible to mobilise major interest in the humanitarian or development issues of that continent.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Poland had been involved in Africa during the Cold War. But with the political shift of 1989, that history, together with all things 'communist', was labelled as 'wrong'. Even if contemporary Polish aid had some continuity with the past (such as the choice of Angola as a priority partner for Polish aid), aid officials, instead of utilising Poland's past achievements in development cooperation, preferred to deny them. The narratives propagated by the current elites (those born out of the Solidarity movement) suggested that the accomplishments of the socialist state were tainted and disingenuous. Consequently, the already limited Polish–African relations from the socialist era were subjected to communal forgetting and classed as 'shameful'. As a result, Africa became conceptualised as a non-place in Polish history. The dominant discourses suggested that for the last fifty years the country had been 'detached' from global relations. Even the youngest generation of aid activists, who were less inclined to criticise everything communist, and who occasionally acknowledged the positive sides of the old system, were not eager to build on the socialist heritage. In line with current OECD/DAC standards, the practices of the Polish People's Republic, which consisted mostly of tied aid, loans, scholarships and scientific and cultural exchanges, did not represent the 'correct' approach to development cooperation. The DAC advised against counting such activities as part of ODA. Informed by Western experts – on whom Polish accession to the exclusive OECD/DAC or EU (Western) clubs was

dependent – on what counts as 'real' aid and what does not, they saw the cooperation between the Soviet camp and the decolonising world as a calculated top-down operation. This image did not match their own vision of development cooperation: they wanted it to be a genuine bottom-up initiative, a moral response to the needs of the most vulnerable societies. As a result, the new aid activists, who worked hard to be recognised as serious and professional practitioners among Western donors, often separated themselves from the past, and did not utilise it in public campaigns. Left with a no-history approach, they had to write their own completely new narrative.

According to every aid worker I talked to, this was the biggest challenge in Poland's emergence as a donor. Aid activists saw the lack of public support for African issues as a special characteristic of Poland, an inherent condition of being a 'new donor'. They compared themselves with envy to 'Western donors' who to them seemed to be the champions of the pursuit of development, societies that not only generously contributed to foreign aid but who were also knowledgeable about global issues. They argued that while 'established donors' had decades to explain their foreign involvement to their constituencies, 'new donors' were only at the beginning of this path. Some aid workers went even further. Even though they were very well educated in global political economy and the history of colonialism, when discussing public support for aid they argued that previous colonial empires had an advantage over countries like Poland. Through their history, they became forever connected with previous colonies, and their developmental involvement was simply a new chapter in the old, though complicated history. Bad or good, the connection was key – it linked foreign societies; they were not abstract to each other. They were no longer strangers, but familiar Others. A-historical post-socialist Poland had to create this link for itself.

This narrative can be criticised on many grounds, and foreign aid is certainly not widely accepted or approved among the British, French, German, American and other Western societies. A closer consideration of other OECD donors suggests that virtually every country struggles to generate public support for foreign aid. For instance, the British aid sector has to systematically overcome the paradigm suggesting that 'Charity begins at home' (Olsen 2001; Otter 2003; Noel, Therien, and Dallaire 2004; Poland 2004). From the Polish perspective, however, these problems seemed to be exclusive to new donors, and Poland specifically. Among aid workers, there was a prevailing notion that 'ignorance' about Africa, the distant needy and

development issues was somehow greater in Poland than anywhere else, especially among 'established donors'.

This disconnection has been perceived by aid workers as the main reason for the supposed 'ignorance' of Polish society about Africa, and the main obstacle in generating public interest in humanitarian and development issues. However, just like for Polish donors, the issue of distance and separation constitutes one of the main concerns for their Western colleagues as well (Cottingham 2000; Silk 2000; Anderson and Smith 2001; Jamieson 2005; Korf 2007). In fact, the question of how to render the *distant stranger* into the *familiar needy* has been part of the industry at large since its early stages (Singer 1972). These issues are fundamental to the existence of foreign aid as they not only allow us to justify it, but they influence where the aid goes. The ability to address these questions translates into the industry's capacity to grow, or at least sustain itself. It also determines the trajectories of aid: for instance, Ukraine and Belarus remain distant strangers for the constituencies in UK, so the involvement of that country in the region is minimal. At the same time, the development gaze formed during colonialism and the Cold War rendered the societies of Eastern Africa into the 'familiar needy', hence the stronger involvement in that region. Exactly the opposite can be said about Poland and its priority partners.

In the 1990s Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson started a conversation about the role of the development gaze and development economics in mobilising the foreign aid industry. Indeed, the power of development discourses, and consequently the existence of the industry, lies in the creation of new economics that describe societies in evolutionary terms and are organised around the concepts of modernity and progress. But these discourses not only have different variants across the world, but also different effects. In their studies, Escobar, Ferguson and most of their contemporaries examined the issue as if there were only two worlds: the First and the Third. As a result of this simplified frame, which did not account for the Second World and all those 'in between', moving in and out, the development discourse becomes a hegemonic world view, which makes development intervention possible and defines it as a practice undertaken by those at the top of the hierarchy ladder over those at the bottom. But what happens when we bring the Second World into the picture? What effect does the development discourse have on countries like Poland and their relation to Africa? Where does it position them in this binary spectrum? How does it impact their role in the aid chain?

As I have shown in the previous chapter, Polish citizens are constantly subjected to development economics and live and breathe the myth of modernity on a daily basis. The development gaze, a totalising lens through which the world is perceived and acted upon, constitutes one of the primary organising features of Polish identity politics. It is the development gaze that organises the way people perceive the global economy, constantly classifying countries and societies through such labels as 'civilised', 'Third World country', 'Developing World'. In the Polish context, however, these labels are not so concerned with distant societies as with Poland itself. The constant comparisons, and referencing of 'Third World countries' versus 'Western standards', work as a socio-political tool to trigger change *in* Poland (rather than outside). Virtually every issue discussed in the public domain, from roads through to education, health care and entertainment, can be promoted on the argument that it presents a 'Western standard', or be criticised as a matter still holding Poland back, keeping it in the 'Third World'. The question 'Is Poland a "Third World country" or a member of the "Civilized World"?' is one of the key issues shaping contemporary state and social issues, among them foreign aid.

In the circumstances in which Polish people themselves try to shake off the derogatory label of non-modern society, in the process of establishing a new identity, the orientalisation of the Other allows them to de-orientalise themselves ('We are not like them' – the Third World is elsewhere). In this context, development discourse, Third World, Developing World and other similar categories become means for identification through separation. In this process, the differences that distinguish Polish society from the Developing World are emphasised. These identity politics have a double implication for advocates of the African trajectory in foreign aid.

Firstly, they cannot use the 'sharing transformation experience' narrative in the way their colleagues implementing aid projects in Eastern Europe do. The 'sharing experiences' approach is based on the idea of commonalities that link donors and recipients and provide a foundation for the successful exchange of ideas. In the Polish case, where the development gaze is not simply looking outwards but also looking inwards, and the main goal is to get rid of the derogatory label of 'developing country', the main goal is to separate and distant themselves from all those with whom Poland shares this identification. In this context, the application of an aid ideology based on similarities and connectivity becomes very challenging, if not impossible.

Secondly, the application of the (Polish variant of) development discourse as a way to mobilise foreign aid becomes, to some extent, counterproductive. Because the development discourse in Poland is used primarily in identity politics and not in reference to aid and global inequality, its main effect is the widening of the gap between Poland and African countries. The goal of the Polish variant of the development gaze is to change the optic: to shorten the focal length between Poland and the West by expanding the distance between this Eastern European player and the Global South. The aim is to move other developing countries as far towards the horizon as possible. The more this discourse is applied, the stronger the distancing with Africa, and consequently the weaker the connection with potential aid recipients. Thus, paradoxically, while in the West the development gaze facilitated the growth of the foreign aid industry, justifying and mobilising interventionism in Africa, in Poland it generated indifference. Indeed, most Poles do perceive African countries as underdeveloped and in need of assistance (TNS OBOP 2009), but this does not mean that they actively want their state or NGOs to engage in Africa on their behalf.

As the Polish case shows, even the most persuasive development discourse will remain only a passive gaze, rather than an effective ideology able to mobilise action, if a society with an ambition to become a donor has no point of connectivity, not even a partial connection, with the potential aid recipient. Aid workers in Poland were on a mission to change this dynamic and create the missing link. Their goal was to render Africa – this 'non-place' – into a place. In order to mobilise public support for their foreign actions, they wanted to create a linkage with the imagined distant needy and create a feeling of interconnectivity.

Development Pedagogy

For Polish organisations operating in Africa, including the PAIN, the emergence as a donor was not simply about contributing to global development and securing resources for that goal. If that were the case, NGOs would have simply focused on fundraising schemes, hired advertising and marketing specialists, and in that way boosted their capacity to operate in distant locations. The vision of these newly converted aid workers was much broader. The idea was that being a donor requires more than wealthy and generous citizens; it requires citizens who look beyond their own state, who are sensitive

to the needs of others, who celebrate diversity. Disappointed with the bigotry and ethnocentric attitudes of many people in the country, they wanted to create a new, more open society. Becoming a donor was no longer about simple logistics (collecting funds, delivery and distribution of aid) but became a mission with a moral lining, a society-transforming mission. It became an educational effort. The importance of this pursuit in the process of emerging as a donor is visible in the way aid stakeholders prioritised different tasks. For instance, before the PAIN established and developed its PR and fundraising department, it already had a fully operational team working on educational campaigns. This approach was typical for most aid NGOs. Similarly, from its inception, the Department of Development Cooperation in the MFA invested in global education campaigns in Poland, and had a comparatively generous budget dedicated to that goal. In comparison, tasks such as evaluation and needs assessments received much less support and interest.

Such a zealous emphasis on pedagogy is not incidental. But in order to understand it, we have to step away from the foreign aid industry, and position this phenomenon in the wider context of the Polish culture of charitable giving and the history of social work in Poland. This history was very strongly shaped by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and nineteenth-century romanticism. The Enlightenment was responsible for setting the foundation of the Polish educational system, and putting socio-cultural development among the society's top values. Positivism was a socio-political progressive movement that questioned the possibility of regaining independence from the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire by force of arms. Instead, Polish positivism, which drew its name from the philosophy of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and others, advocated that independence could be won gradually by creating a strong unified society. This could only be achieved through universal and compulsory education, establishment of equality of rights among all classes and groups, and full integration of all minorities. The idea was that through 'organic work' at the grassroots of society, rather than military uprisings, the real national identity could be maintained and foreign oppression resisted.

The ideology of this movement became part of the popular imaginary and national culture, and remains so to this day. To a large extent it defined the ideal model of citizenship as socially engaged and politically active. It also provided a template for the preferred type of social activism, which sees education as one of the key tools generating social change. This model, however, operates upon the

class-based assumption that society is divided among those who possess knowledge and the ignorant masses who need to be enlightened for the benefit of society as a whole. It is the obligation of the elites to educate the masses (the 'average Pole', as they are usually defined) and through that process guide society towards progression. According to Joanna Kubicka (2016), this town-based movement declared rejection of the charitable approach of the old aristocratic families. Influenced by the works of Samuel Smiles, it defined itself as self-help, as a cooperative initiative. But as Kubicka's work shows (even if she is reluctant to admit it), unlike French or British self-help movements, the Polish one was not rooted in workers but instead in the young 'intelligentsia', representatives of 'good families'. Perhaps they did not enjoy the wealth of rural landlords or factory owners but they had the social capital of the upper classes, which allowed them to prioritise and cherish intellectual and pedagogical activities, to establish schools, publishing houses and various self-help associations. This specific model of social engagement, in which charitable action blends with a cooperative model and links with pedagogical efforts and national identity building, had influenced a wide spectrum of social activism in Poland, and now became visible in the aid industry as well.

'If we want Poles to understand development issues well, we have to continuously carry out intensive educational action', Filip Kaczmarek, the MEP I mentioned in Chapter 1, argued in the interview conducted for the Polish Humanitarian Action Newsletter (Wilczyńska 2008: 4;). These sentiments were echoed by many aid workers in Poland, who often in informal conversations complained that Polish society was 'ignorant', 'uneducated', 'lacks understanding of global connections and development issues', and therefore needs to be educated. However, these frustrations should not be taken at face value, but perhaps as a reflection of the larger pattern in the history of Polish social and charitable activism, which is still driven by sentiments echoing the class divisions of the nineteenth century. Just as Poland's intellectual elites in the past engaged in setting up schools and libraries in the hope of advancing social change in the country, so do today's leaders in the foreign aid industry invest time and money in educational campaigns and teacher and educator networks, with the hope of inspiring change and creating new citizens. During the Partition era of the nineteenth century, or throughout the interwar period, the goal was to create a new type of national citizen who would embrace Polish national identity and together create an integrated *Polish* society. Now, in the mid 2000s, in the post-Cold

War, post-EU accession era, the emphasis was on shaping new *global* citizens who would care about the world beyond their own state. Both past and present educational pursuits have aimed to prompt action. In the nineteenth century, the goal was to foster patriotic behaviour and knowledge that would inform the will to engage in the political fight for Polish independence and its future prosperity. Now, the goal of global pedagogy was to foster attitudes and spread knowledge that would facilitate active support for development cooperation, and strengthen the process of emerging as a donor.

While the process of emerging as a donor was not an easy one, and the representatives of Polish NGOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could barely agree on anything (see the last chapter of this book, and Drążkiewicz 2016), the global education domain seemed like the only field in which they were close to consensus. Together they worked towards including global education in the national curriculum, making it a compulsory theme in national education. In 2011, the Zagranica Group , the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Education signed a memorandum of understanding about promoting global education in Poland. This initiative was an outcome of diligent work by a few aid activists who within the Zagranica Group created a special task force dedicated to strengthening global education in Poland. They represented the PAH, the Centre for Civic Education (Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej), the Institute of Global Responsibility (Instytut Odpowiedzialności Globalnej) and the Education for Democracy Foundation (which for some years had been responsible for managing the MFA-funded global education programme). When the president of the latter organisation, Krzysztof Stanowski, moved to the Ministry of Education, these efforts could be consolidated.

The ultimate goal was to secure a strong position for global education in Polish education. The aim was to stop relying on the good will of teachers in incorporating global and development issues into education, and to move these topics from an elective extra-curricular option to an obligatory part of the curriculum. As one of the activists who was heavily involved in negotiations with the MFA and lobbying school circles told me, their actions to achieve their goals had a very wide scope. In 2008 they were already

> trying to identify the most popular textbooks for geography, history, civic education. We wanted to collaborate with their publishers and authors and offer them materials that would allow them to create special sections or subsections on issues that we care about. Why? Because even if something is in the national curriculum, teachers still have some level of

freedom to discuss it only marginally or not at all, often because they feel they do not have the basic background knowledge or materials [to teach those issues]. If it is in textbooks, it will be easier for teachers to lead such classes.

Educating society and fostering attitudes that would promote Polish foreign involvement were among the top priorities for stakeholders on all sides. It was a grand pedagogical mission, defined as global education: 'a part of civic education and upbringing. It expands their scope by illuminating the existence of phenomena, and interdependences connecting people and places. The goal of global education is to prepare its recipients to face the challenges that are relevant to humanity at large'.[2] At this declarative level, global education seemed like a very broad phenomenon, but as I will demonstrate below, in practice, in the earliest stages of Poland's emergence as a donor it was a pedagogical endeavour aimed at disseminating very specific knowledge *about* and *for* development. While the stated goal was learning about global issues, the emphasis on 'connectivity' and 'interdependence' – terms used extensively by the propagators of Polish involvement in Africa – clearly suggests that the purpose of global education was to bridge the gap between Poland and aid recipients in Africa. In Poland, global education became one of the main tools for discovering Africa for Polish audiences and rendering it from a 'distant' and 'irrelevant' continent into a familiar and relevant subject of foreign aid. Global education was not simply an initiative created for fundraising purposes. If that were the case, aid workers in Poland would have simply turned to PR specialists. The fact that they recruited educational experts long before they hired advertising experts suggests that the goal was far broader: it was about creating social change in the country. Poland's emergence as a donor in the African continent required a new quality of society, a willingness to give and engage with the world and global issues. The transition from recipient to donor required a transition of the minds and souls of Polish society.

Institutions

Even though Global and Development Education has its own unique Polish history (Kuleta-Hulboy and Gontarska 2015), it is not a uniquely Polish invention (Bourn 2015). The Council of Europe's North-South Centre, within its 'Maastricht Global Education

Declaration' (2002), defines development education as part of global education, which 'opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all. Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship'. The Contribution of Development Education and Awareness Rising to the European Consensus (2007), a document signed by staff members of several national ODA institutions, NGOs and EU bodies, states that

> Development Education and Awareness Raising contribute to the eradication of poverty and to the promotion of sustainable development through public awareness raising and education approaches and activities that are based on values of human rights, social responsibility, gender equality, and a sense of belonging to one world; on ideas and understandings of the disparities in human living conditions and of efforts to overcome such disparities; and on participation in democratic actions that influence social, economic, political or environmental situations that affect poverty and sustainable development. (Development Education Exchange in Europe Project 2007)

The document also calls for 'increased support for development education' and 'exchange of information and experience on development education between governments and civil society actors'. The OECD/DAC also encourages its member states to develop national targets on development education spending as a percentage of ODA spending.

As Bourn (2015) suggests, around the Western world, global education emerged as a response to aid fatigue, out of the need for public support and the legitimisation of the aid practice. The Polish case is not much different here, with the exception of scale and intensity. The dominant perception that Poland, as a 'new donor', represents a special case in which the level of public interest in development issues is much lower than anywhere else requires extra resources to be mobilised. Consequently, from the very early stages of Poland's emergence as a donor, global education enjoyed strong institutional backing and became widely popular among aid organisations. It became a priority in the process of emerging as a Western donor.

Again, the PAH, along with some other NGOs was the leader of this movement. Almost at the same time as the first convoys to Sarajevo took place, the first educational campaigns started. Janina

Ochojska knew that if she wanted to render the hype surrounding aid to Bosnia into a strong social movement of people ready to support foreign aid, she had to prompt a social change. Enjoying the support, but also facing harsh criticism and racism, she saw education as the best tool to achieve her goals. Long before anyone in Poland was talking about 'global' or 'development' education, in 1993 the PAH initiated its first campaign. In 1993, Dominik Łapieński made a short film about the work of the foundation (which at the time was still operating under the EquiLibre name). One hundred copies of the documentary were distributed among schools, to be shown to children across the country. At the same time, some radio stations agreed to broadcast on-air lessons about humanitarian assistance. This initiative provided a foundation for more systematic humanitarian education campaigns run by the PAH, later evolving into one of the largest and most active departments in the organisation. Its main focus was schools and young adults. Soon, a special section dedicated to 'educating' policy makers was set up. Importantly, its work was never conceptualised as lobbying, but rather as a pedagogical and informational endeavour.

Similarly, when in the early 2000s the MFA was establishing its Department of Development Cooperation, the need for global education was recognised as a priority. This approach was reflected in financial allocations. While in 2005 the MFA expenditure for this purpose was approximately 50,000 euros, in 2009 it was estimated at the much higher level of 800,000 euros. In 2011 it was worth approximately 490,000 euros, double the aid budget for Angola, the only African priority partner for Polish aid at the time. Throughout this period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held separate calls for global education projects, and sponsored development volunteering (initiatives predominantly seen as educational opportunities for Poles, which included an obligatory 'global educational component' in Poland). The MFA also actively encouraged its NGO partners to include global education modules in their foreign aid projects. This means that for every project implemented abroad, there could be some sort of educational campaign organised in Poland. Special resources were dedicated to create partnerships with media. They allowed the MFA to sponsor journalists' trips to developing countries. Finally, for five years from 2007, the MFA organised an elaborate event in Warsaw – a Foreign Aid Forum – whose main purpose was public outreach.

Significantly, while global/development education constitutes one of the pillars of Polish aid, most of its activities do not reflect the

thematic and regional priorities of Polish aid. In my work I did not come across educational campaigns that used Belarus or Ukraine as case studies, or that referred in any way to democratisation issues. Instead, most of them were concerned with the Global South, predominantly Africa. Significantly, hardly any of the organisations working in Eastern Europe had an interest in development/global education. The only organisations that were truly engaged with global education were those operating in Africa.[3] This might suggest that global education is seen as a tool whose main objective is generating public support for foreign aid rather than education about the world at large. While organisations working to the East of Poland take public support for granted and do not feel that they require additional efforts to legitimise themselves, their colleagues in organisations working in Africa do not enjoy this privilege, and use global education to generate interest and support for their activities. Even in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was an unspoken consensus that global education is about a very specific niche of development, that is, poverty eradication. Consequently, it is strongly linked to aid and becomes education that popularises foreign aid. The original meaning of development education might be to include *global* issues in the public debate, but for Polish educators this pedagogical exercise has a very clear agenda, which is to promote very specific definitions of development and to generate public interest in a *specific* region (Africa), rather than global issues at large.

At the same time, the choice of pedagogy as the main method in popularising Poland's emergence as a donor, and the pressure to include global education in schools along with scientific subjects (biology, history, geography), facilitates the removal of all political and cultural problems associated with foreign aid and development and recasts them in terms of the apparently more neutral realms of science (Escobar 1995: 45). The hope of aid workers is that through introducing global education, all controversies surrounding their activities will be overcome, and all claims regarding the necessity of Polish intervention in Africa will be made through the simple mandate of rationality and science. This would allow the naturalisation of Polish foreign involvement and seal its progression from an emerging to an established donor.

But development education does not equal development economics or development studies. While an important part of the Western scientific model is debating, and fostering critical thinking, global education seems to be established to promote a very specific world view, and often provides answers rather than questions. I remember

having a conversation with an MFA staff member who was managing global education issues. She had just come back from a stakeholders' meeting in Norway. She told me how surprised she was when she realised that Norwegians allow and fund initiatives that do not advocate for development aid, and which actually might criticise it. She was puzzled about why the Norwegian state administration would have any interest in supporting initiatives that undermine their own actions. Whether the Norwegian government really does this or not is beyond the point here. What is important is that this observation became an important opportunity for this staff member to reflect on the practices of her own institution and Polish NGOs. The 'critical model' was not the approach she knew from her home institution and the NGOs she worked with. It is true that in Poland global education was seen as a critique of the status quo, but as it was born out of concern for the ignorance of Polish society, it was filling the gap with its own knowledge – a knowledge that was seen as *right*. It seemed that in that variant, global education did not leave much space for questioning because it was seen as a *moral science*, a knowledge with an ethical task. According to the propagators of global education in Poland, at its basis are *values* such as 'dignity, justice, solidarity, equality, peace and freedom'. The goal of global education is to foster critical thinking, but at the same time its aim is to 'change attitudes' and foster 'responsibility, respect, honesty, openness, personal engagement, readiness for continuous learning'.[4] Defined in such a way, global education is actually distancing itself from science, as its emphasis is not on understanding the world through observation and experiment, but instead on fostering specific behaviours and values. Supporters of global education try to convince the public that it cannot be questioned as it is proof of their 'mature involvement' in the world.

Global Education

Until now, I have used the terms *global* and *development education* interchangeably. Even though some aid workers would insist on their separation, in practice both were part of the same pedagogical effort. They were used simultaneously, as only together did they make sense. The first term, *global education*, endorsed the idea of interconnectivity, emphasising the global rather than the local world as the main field for social action. The second term, *development education*, promoted development as the primary tool for making

change in the world. One was setting the scene; another was defining action. Together they aimed to create a new society whose members would see themselves as participants of the globalised world, but most importantly would support foreign aid as a key solution to global problems (Paxton and Knack 2008). In Poland, global education was designed as a tool to assist in overcoming ethnocentrism and the assumption that Poland is detached from the world. Perceiving the 'general public' as blind to global interconnectivity and effectively focused only on their own local reality (i.e. Central and Eastern Europe), ignorant of what is going on in the world (especially in Africa), aid workers strive to call into doubt the idea of locality while emphasising the experiences of the globalised, deterritorialised world (Appadurai 1996: 52).

The emphasis on putting Poland back on the global map and creating discourses that can overcome the disempowering assumption that Poland is detached from the global world, from Africa, has been among the priorities of aid industry representatives. This process involved rewriting history. Like every social movement, this one was eager to legitimise itself through rooting itself in history and creating its own ancestry. Aid workers needed to find their own, 'new' foundations. But the space for manoeuvre was very limited. As noted earlier, the usage of the country's tainted socialist history was not an option. The referencing of old Polish colonial connections and the work of the Polish Colonial League from the 1920s was also not appropriate. The search for even the most partial connections was frantic and resulted in often surprising associations. This was particularly clear during European Development Days, organised during the Polish presidency in Warsaw. The event was open to the public, and as such was an excellent opportunity to promote among Polish audiences a narrative that would emphasise Polish connectivity with the world. The event also included international guests, and so became a platform to create the same narrative for the external public, and to demonstrate Poland's 'mature' rather than 'emerging' status as an international player. The MFA worked hard to create a display that would address these issues, that would justify Poland's role as an international donor. One of the main tools to achieve these goals was the creation of a historical ancestry of Polish aid. This task was easy in regard to Polish involvement in the East, and Polish interest in democracy promotion. On huge banners, floating from the ceiling and hanging on the walls, large images of Solidarity leaders were displayed, suggesting that the heritage of the Solidarity movement predestined Poland to take up its role as a democracy

promoter. But the task of creating such a 'pantheon of saints' for Polish involvement in Africa was not easy. In the efforts to create the missing link, the stories of two men were called upon: those of Kazimierz Nowak and Ryszard Kapuściński. Both received special exhibitions, which were supposed to be evidence of Poland's long-lasting involvement with the world, and Africa specifically. Kazimierz Nowak was a Polish amateur explorer who between 1919 and 1936 travelled alone by bicycle and by boat, on foot, by horse and by camel across Africa, from Libya to Cape Agulhas and back to Algeria. Ryszard Kapuściński was a journalist who from 1956 until the mid 1990s reported from all around the world. He became best known for his literary reportage and written accounts of various historical events from around the globe. Among them, the history of Haile Selassie's declining regime in Ethiopia held a special place, along with his travel memoir from his African trips, *The Shadow of the Sun*. The selection of these two individuals might seem like a random and misguided attempt to create a Polish aid ancestry. In fact, it fulfilled its function: it demonstrated that Poland had been connected with the distant African continent, and that its ambition to be active in that region was not accidental but constituted continuity with the (newly excavated and rewritten) past. Nowak's history was only discovered in the mid 2000s. Consequently, even though he operated in the colonial era, he had not been claimed by any political movement before this time. He had *carte blanche* and could now be utilised by the propagators of Polish involvement in Africa to build their discourses on Polish connectivity with the world. Kapuściński, on the other hand, was an extremely well-known figure. His international recognition in a way suppressed the fact that he operated during the communist regime. His work, which concerned the world, his globetrotting lifestyle and his international recognition were the best counterargument for all those who argued that Poland had no connection with Africa and with the world, and therefore should not be involved in the Global South.

Kapuściński was one of the most celebrated figures among Polish aid workers, regardless of their institutional affiliation. Most of them knew his work inside out, and used him as a role model. For instance, in 2008 the Institute of Global Responsibility conducted an educational campaign that aimed to promote a new discourse on the Global South. In order to achieve its goal, the organisation arranged workshops and published a pamphlet entitled 'How to Talk about the Majority of the World' (Gadzinowska et al. 2008). This manual explained in detail what type of information and knowledge was

acceptable and which subjects should be avoided in the new dis-
course. For instance, instead of talking about war and violence, the
authors suggested a focus on 'multiculturalism, examples of conflicts
and ways of dealing with them', emphasising the role of citizens in the
work towards peace. Instead of talking about the needs of 'countries
of the South', the discourse of rights (on the side of the 'South') and
responsibilities (of the 'North') was suggested. Older and 'outdated'
sources of information, especially those from the early twentieth
century (such as the Polish novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz's *In Desert
and Wilderness*), were to be substituted with more 'modern' sources,
such as the reportage of Ryszard Kapuściński. The booklet promoted
the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, an initiative started by
the Irish aid organisation Dochas to help create new forms of com-
munication with the public. But while in Europe the Code was used
by the industry as an internal matter, in Poland it was mobilised to
alter the way in which global issues were discussed at large. Again, the
historical 'pantheon of saints' was mobilised to justify it. According
to its supporters, the Code 'reflects the ideas of great thinkers such
as Kapuściński, Gandhi, Sen, Mandela' (Gadzinowska et al. 2008:
21). One could pause to question whether all of them actually sup-
ported the ideas presented in the Code, and what Kapuściński is
doing in this league, yet the inclusion of a *Polish* reporter – a *Polish*
link with the *global* world – among the supposed supporters of the
new development discourse leaves no room for doubt. The new lingo
is presented as a justified necessity that is now being legitimised by
well-known *international* and *Polish* authorities.

The appropriation of Kapuściński's heritage by and for the
development industry was sealed in 2009, when a Polish UNDP
worker successfully launched a new initiative: the Kapuściński
Development Lectures. Funded jointly by the UNDP and the
European Commission, the series 'offers students from the European
Union member states an unprecedented opportunity to learn about
and discuss development issues such as climate change, human rights,
aid effectiveness, Europe–Africa relations, Millennium Development
Goals among others. The high-level events contribute to the debate
and formulation of European development policy'.[5] The naming of
the event after the Polish writer is a clear attempt to change the public
perception of Poland from a country removed to the margins of
globalisation to a country that has been actively involved in shaping
the global political economy.

But the search for historical 'roots' is only one of the many attempts
to reconnect Poland with the world, with Africa, and building new

(Western) foreign aid. While foreign aid ideology requires historical foundations, it also needs new visions of the future. That is why in their educational efforts aid stakeholders on every occasion emphasise the contemporary connections that make Poland a member of the wider (global, European etc.) community. An excellent example is a campaign launched by UNDP-Warsaw and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one of the first initiatives in which Poland's newly established Department of Development Cooperation got involved. It was also one of the last initiatives of the UNDP offices in Warsaw: these offices were established to support Poland's own development, and now, as the country joined the EU, it was time to move on to new tasks and locations. Significantly, in 2004, the two organisations launched a social campaign about Polish aid. As a UNDP staff member explained to me:

> Because it was our first campaign of that scale, we had no illusions that we could convince everybody that we need to help others. So instead we wanted to provoke people to think about whether we should assist, and why. We wanted to establish this as a topic, and also in the context that we have to help other countries, and not only receive aid because we are entitled, or because we are poor. That is why this campaign's slogan was a bit provocative – 'Poland is Paradise', but with a footnote explaining 'for over half a billion of the poorest citizens of the world'. … It gave NGOs the impulse to get involved. It also allowed us to find a group of journalists who began to be interested in this topic.

The goal of this campaign was to convince the public that 'It is time to help others', to move on from being the aid recipient. In the vision propagated by the campaign, Poland was represented not only as a global actor, but as an actor who held a specific position. It was defined as wealthy – a novice idea in a country that was still coming to terms with its own development. It was a brave and unorthodox notion, but it became a leitmotif of most educational campaigns: to convince the public that Poland is a wealthy club, and that through its global positioning it needs to expand its scope of activities beyond its immediate neighbourhood.

In the process of Poland's emergence as a donor, in the development education campaigns the application of global scale and globalisation became one of the most important features. In this process, foreign aid became conceptualised as an expression of 'global solidarity'. At the centre of this process were the emphases on international connectivity. Global educators of the early 2000s were emphasising mutual dependences of various societies, and the impact of locally

made decisions on the world at large. They argued that thanks to the global education, people can become conscious and responsible citizens of their region and their country, and through that process they can at the same time become conscious and responsible citizens of the world.

The aim was to promote this sort of imagination in which the globe becomes a frame for living. While anthropologists and geographers claim that 'no one lives in the world in general' (Feld and Basso 1996), development educators are on a mission to prove them wrong, and to foster a sort of globally grounded identification. A new type of self-awareness is being promoted. In this new identification, globality becomes envisioned as inherent to people's lives, while cosmopolitanism becomes a crucial lifestyle feature.

Linked to the idea of modernity, which, as we saw in the preceding discussion, is at the centre of the developmental endeavour, globalisation becomes something more than just a contemporary condition (Giddens 1990; Bauman 1995, 1998). Even though aid activists often criticise the effects of globalisation (especially in terms of its impact on global and local markets), the same globalisation becomes a vehicle for legitimising their calling to assist distant strangers (cf. Singer 1972; Jamieson 2005; Lenferna 2010). In the work of the development movement, globalisation becomes a celebrated virtue, and a project in itself (Friedman 1998).

As Appadurai (1996) notes, such a globalised experience of the world is typical for those groups who have the privilege to live it. Achievement of a cosmopolitan identity is possible through transnational and transcultural encounters (Albrow 1997: 4). Polish society has some opportunities to experience such encounters, but they are not in line with the type of cosmopolitanism that would support Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa. What supporters of an African trajectory of aid wish for is a cosmopolitanism that embraces and includes African countries. In Poland, however, only 15 per cent of the population travel abroad within a given year, and most of that group travel predominantly to European countries. At the same time, the number of people from Africa visiting or living in Poland is so marginal that it is usually not even counted in national statistics.[6] African history is not covered in schools, and African issues are barely featured in the media. In such circumstances, how can the African–cosmopolitan encounter be experienced? The aid activist's answer is simple: this experience has to be created, and development education is the way to do it.

Experiencing Africa

The goal of the Polish variant of development education was to build a meaningful relationship between the public and the locations and societies that are to be subjected to foreign aid. As the title of a conference held in Łódź in 2008 suggested, the aim was to convince people that 'Africa, [is] so far, yet so close'. In the second half of the 2000s, such events were mushrooming. All around Poland, 'talking events' were organised in all possible shapes and forms (seminars, panels, debates), where aid workers would discuss specific development issues in Africa and the role of foreign aid in addressing these. But places make poor abstractions; they are ubiquitous, difficult to grasp. If separated from immediate, personal perceptions, they in fact have little meaning for people. This is why simply 'talking' about foreign aid locations and their needs is so ineffective, and why places instead have to be materialised. And this is why so many global education campaigns proposed a different approach that aimed to foster a material, physical and aesthetic experience of Africa.

A large proportion of global education initiatives were specifically designed to stimulate the senses. For instance, PAIN volunteers returning from the field were encouraged to organise thematic evenings open to the public, where they would not only talk about their work but also show slides from distant countries, offer food tastings, sample ethnic music and display souvenirs they had brought home from African locations in which they had worked. They were also expected to conduct outreach sessions in schools and universities. When I returned from Sudan I was invited by one of the PAIN's global education staff members to attend a training course she was organising for young educators. She asked me to bring photos and perhaps some material objects from the mission, so that I could show the members of the course what life on the mission was like. That knowledge would later help them in their work with school children, and in their own pedagogical efforts. The ultimate goal was not only to fulfil the objectives of global education, but also to familiarise children with the work of aid organisations.

Consequently, such events often included elements in which basic information about different societies was conveyed ('this is how they live', 'this is what they eat', 'these are the problems they are facing' and so on). With the support of Polish aid, exhibitions and movie nights were organised in town squares, schools and churches. Many of these initiatives were accompanied by ethnic concerts and dance

shows. For a few years, the Global Green Network together with the PAH and other NGOs held 'Night for Africa', a fundraiser combined with outreach and educational activities: festivities were accompanied with local food and crafts. The MFA organised its Polish Aid Forum. Its first edition, organised at Warsaw University Library in 2007, offered among other things concerts by African, Belarusian, Armenian and Vietnamese musicians, photo exhibitions from around the world, fair trade products, food stalls selling African, Arabic and Moldavian cuisine, opportunities to take photos in different folk costumes, African craft exhibitions, and competitions about countries where Poland delivers aid. Of course, the event also included less playful elements: there were debates, and approximately forty NGOs showcased their work. I explain this side of the event in detail elsewhere (Drążkiewicz 2016). What interests me here is the emphasis that all these events placed on creating a sensual experience of Africa in Poland.

It seems that development educators were inspired in their pursuit by their beloved journalist Ryszard Kapuściński, who argued that sensual experience is essential for the understanding of Africa. As he wrote in *The Shadow of the Sun*:

> More than anything, one is struck by the light. Light everywhere. Brightness everywhere. Everywhere, the sun. … Suddenly, still rubbing our eyes, we find ourselves in a humid inferno. We immediately start to sweat. … Something else strikes the new arrival even as he descends the steps of the airplane: the smell of the tropics. (Kapuściński 2002: 3)

For Kapuściński, the light and smell were what distinguished Africa from the world he knew at home. Development educators with whom I had a chance to talk and to observe in their work replicated the same logic, prioritising bodily experience. Consequently, their global education projects were attempts to recreate a sensual familiarity with African locations. The emphasis on experience, being there, meant that only a special type of educator was seen as trustworthy and legitimate – a *witness* who had been *There*. For this reason, practically every organisation involved in Africa expected its aid workers to give some kind of 'testimony' to the people in Poland about the world they had observed and the work they had done. The logic behind these events was that Africa was first and foremost 'the experience', which can only be understood by those who have been there and touched it. Through the presence of the witness, the African experience was to be recreated for those who had no chance to experience it first-hand. In the formative years of Polish aid, aid

activists made every effort to enable those who were willing to listen to *sense* Africa. They wanted people to see it, hear it, taste it and touch it, without crossing borders.

On most occasions, development educators used simple methods to achieve this goal, such as those listed above. But one organisation went a step further. In the spring of 2007, 'Youth for the World' – the Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service – built an 'African village' in Krakow.[7] The idea was to create a visual and sensory setting for development education workshops for children and teenagers. The main purpose of the initiative was to facilitate understanding of Africa by creating it in the backyard, by feeling it, familiarising it, learning it and finally understanding it. This specific exhibition proved very successful, and the African village soon grew to become a 'Village of the World'. Now, next to the 'African' mud-huts, visitors can enter replicas of a tipi tent, an igloo, a yurt and a hut from Papua New Guinea. Each dwelling represents a different continent and each is equipped with various household items and instruments. The emphasis on touch and other senses suggests that for the organisers the primary interest is in creating the situation of encounter. The question, however, is what exactly are the global education spectators encountering? Although this exhibition might appear as a museum, the goal is not to educate people about the regional architecture or material culture across the world. In fact, while the 'Village of the World' displays the materiality of houses and objects, the knowledge it produces concerns global inequality and development. The role of the displayed objects, and more importantly the workshops that are run in this venue, is to gear children towards becoming future supporters of foreign aid. Information boards accompanying each part of the exhibition leave not much room for freedom of interpretation. While they provide basic facts about the objects on display, they predominantly focus on the socio-economic description of the given section. They focus on issues that are dominant in the development discourse, such as health and education access, economic levels and poverty issues. In 2014, when I visited the village, the exit path that was closing the exhibition included a long row of information boards that specifically talked about global inequalities and promoted foreign aid as a way to overcome development issues.

When Timothy Mitchell (1991) or Anne Clendinning (2013) described the great world exhibitions, they made a point about their role in shaping the colonial regime. With the growth of the aid industry, yet another incarnation of the 'world exhibit' is being promoted. This time the purpose is to create a symbolic representation of the

world in which development becomes the main organising feature. In the past, exhibitions objectified cultures of the world in order to generate feelings of superiority among the visitors, who could compare their home 'civilisations' with the 'savage' and 'backward' ways presented on display. All of the people I talked to, all those who were involved in designing and implementing these educational initiatives, were very clear that their main purpose was to counter all the divisions that colonialism had created, including racism and prejudice. Their main goal was to work towards a more equal world. This and all other similar education campaigns were built on the assumption that the low levels of support for foreign aid towards Africa, and high levels of bigotry, result from a lack of knowledge or misinformation about development issues. They hoped that education would create social change, and they believed that the most effective form of education was through generating experiences. It was their own way of overcoming the 'crisis of representation' in the development world. Paradoxically, however, in their search for the best educational methods, they came full circle and chose a method that was dangerously close to the emblematic colonial practice. The difference is that while previous exhibitions were celebrations of powerful empires, the Villages of the World and other similar initiatives were appropriations of international donorship, 'generous societies', and aim to generate feelings of compassion and solidarity. In this process, the idea behind the world exhibitions is somehow taken to the next level. While the 'world as a picture' was a way of ordering reality to be viewed, experienced and investigated, the world of senses in global education was created to be acted upon – to engage in foreign aid and development cooperation.

Development educators aim to achieve these goals by creating feelings of interconnectivity with the African Other through mobilising emotional compassion. Potential subjects of foreign aid intervention – African societies and locations – are crafted as a sensual experience. In order to mobilise support for foreign aid, tragedy becomes an aesthetic subject of touch and passion. It is formed as idealised visions, purveyed by aesthetic realism and populist nostalgia. These aesthetics of poverty derive from the assumed and anticipated misery of those in Africa. According to Bourdieu (1984), aesthetics in the Western world always express social distinction and judgements. Consequently, such strong aestheticisation of representation of the 'Global South' becomes an expression of social distinction, which is used as validation for external intervention. Difference, whether economic, political, social or cultural, forms the basis for the claim that

intervention is needed; this is how the myth of sustainable development is perpetuated. Consequently, for the development myth to be effective, constant rediscovery of the distant Other must take place. That is why, while on the one hand aid agents build their actions upon universalistic claims of global solidarity and interconnectivity, on the other they strongly emphasise particularistic world visions.

Development Education

Global education is organised around the discovery of differences and particularities. This practice is crucial for generating interest in specific trajectories of foreign aid. It worked as justification and motivation for undertaking aid pursuits in distant, African locations. The aim was to render the distant stranger into a familiar Other. But it also aimed to turn the Other into the needy, and the Polish citizen into a generous and charitable citizen of the world. I have shown how educators mobilised senses and used experiences to achieve this goal. But as much emphasis as they put on bodily experience, they also appealed to emotions. As they aimed to create a connection with the African continent, their second goal was to create specific – compassionate – feelings about 'African issues'.

Again, this goal was to be achieved through generating *experiences*, and to that end, educators would often mobilise role play or drama. An excellent example of such practice is one of the very first educational projects undertaken by the PAH in Polish schools in the 1990s:

> To help somebody, you have to feel their situation. In schools we are organising for our students a game called 'Passage'. It lasts for a few hours. Participants have to learn what a migrant is going through. We create families, and then we blindfold them. The bombarding starts (some students imitate the sounds, banging on different objects). In the chaos and panic, children lose their parents. They call each other by their new names, given to them at the beginning of the game. They are so into it that sometimes they cry. Someone plays the role of a bad soldier; someone plays the border guard who performs the control. They very quickly forget that it is only a game. Afterwards, they reflect on the fact that earlier they had thought of refugees as sneaky people who come to Poland to make money. They admit they were mistaken. (Steciuk and Szczygieł 2002: 115)

This specific lesson was concerned with migration, one of the pressing issues for the PAH at the time. When the interest in foreign aid shifted to African issues and global poverty in the mid 2000s, the

methods did not change much. In 2008, I had the opportunity to participate in a course on gender and development issues organised by a feminist organisation based in Krakow. It was an interesting case as it was one of the few projects aimed at university students rather than primary or secondary school children. The course was organised over a few day-long sessions. There were some fifteen participants and three educators involved. Like most such events, workshops and various activities were alternated with coffee breaks. On one day, when it was time for a coffee break, participants were asked to take part in a lottery. Those who got red tickets were offered a wide range of snacks and drinks, while the rest were given one bottle of water and a packet of biscuits to share. Puzzled by this turn of events, and confused by the rules of the game, everyone eventually proceeded to the main lunch table. When the break ended, our tutors asked: 'What did you feel when you had nothing to eat? What was it like to see others have plenty to eat?' Some said they thought it was unfair, but many simply thought it was a misunderstanding, not really grasping that it was part of the workshop training. As the organisers later explained, this 'exercise' was designed to mobilise the emotions through which participants could understand and finally experience the life of those in need, those subjected to foreign aid. Through the mobilisation of emotions, he wanted them to experience life in Africa.

What this specific exercise, the role play offered by the PAH to school children, the Villages of the World Park in Krakow and the Ministerial Aid Forum had in common was the idea that they would all help to bring the generic 'non-European Others', the potential recipients of Polish foreign aid, out of the imagination vacuum and make them a *reality* to Polish audiences. The ultimate goal was to overcome 'Polish ignorance' about non-European (African) societies, and foster a *sense* of global interconnectivity. The choice of specific 'sensual' methods was driven by the belief, often repeated by global education campaigners, that sensual experience provides access to some interior truths that are otherwise hidden from human cognition. Aid advocates were not interested in creating shock value, but firmly believed that through mobilising all senses and emotions their educational work would be more effective. Through these endeavours, distant locations and societies that are otherwise, according to my informants, just an abstraction were to be confirmed as a subject – a subject of development cooperation and foreign aid.

Much has been written about anthropology of the senses. The activities of global educators seem to be in sync with the general idea

that senses help us to better understand and experience the reality we are living. As Hetherington (2003) notices, touch is a way of removing doubt, of confirming the existence of a subject. While sight might be deceiving, touch provides confirmation that something is real. Building on research concerning medieval Christian saintly relics, he notices that all objects carry *praesentia*, the involvement of the absent Other within the material presence of social life. In medieval times, praesentia of saintly relics allowed European Christians to experience the presence of dead and distant saints through seemingly insignificant fragments of ordinary objects (wood, fabric etc.). Development educators applied a very similar rule of association: they hoped that through the experience of African objects imported to Poland, Polish audiences would be able to experience Africa. The objects, music and food were used to create a connection between people in Poland and their potential subjects of charitable giving. The power of praesentia of medieval relics was secured through emotional responses to the religious connotations of the objects, their association with the beloved but also terrifying God. The objects were powerful because they triggered certain emotions. This was also the goal of global education, to create an ideology that would be powerful enough to mobilise emotions, as that was the only way to achieve the ultimate goal of global education: active support for foreign aid.

Through sensualisation and generation of bodily and emotional experiences, a carefully crafted development ideology was to become socialised and internalised among young generations. The goal was firstly to expand the horizon and make a connection between Polish society and African issues, but secondly to mobilise an interest in *caring* for them and eventually engaging in the aid practice. Developers' idea of care corresponded with Sevenhuijsen's understanding of caring, defined as an 'ability and willingness to "see" and to "hear" needs and take responsibility for those needs being met' (Korf 2007: 372 after Sevenhuijsen 1998). Development educators seemed to take this metaphor literally, which is why they invested so much time and effort in creating African experiences at home. Their practices suggested a conviction that one needs to *sense* the Other in order to create a relation with him and be able to care for him.

Conclusions

Timothy Mitchell observed that 'the more natural the object appears the less obvious this discursive manufacture will be' (2002: 210). Seen

from the perspective of Western donors, international aid appears as a 'natural' thing, and while many experts analyse its effects and logic, very few actually study how they are propagated in donor countries (Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Little and Painter 1995; Gow 1996; Grillo 1997; Crewe and Harrison 1999). But the case of emerging donor Poland provides an excellent study to observe how the discourses are manufactured. Since the mid 1990s, Polish development educators have attempted to naturalise Polish aid to Africa by creating a familiar image of the continent, through its approximation.

To date, most studies of development discourse have focused on knowledge and marginally discuss the issue of *gaze* (Escobar 1995). The gaze, as Latour (1988) has described, acts as the mind's eye; it organises the world view and shapes the way cultures see the world and make it visible. While the power of the visual no doubt holds a particularly strong position within the parameters of the aid discourse, analysis of global education suggests that foreign aid is a far more totalising experience, in which all senses play a role. Thus, we should perhaps speak of the aid *sense*, rather than the *gaze* exclusively. This sense becomes a form of bodily culture that redefines distant places and our perception of them; it directs our attention to very specific places (Africa) and remodels not only our way of perceiving these locations but also experiencing them. Ultimately, the aid sense facilitates the consumption of the world (in this case Africa) exclusively in terms of global economic inequalities and development. It enables the process of 'discovering' Africa for the Polish audiences and for Polish aid, through the staged construction of difference and otherness.

The construction of the aid sense enables the formulation of global problems (and solutions to them) in terms of international assistance. As such, it plays an important role in validating the process of emergence as a donor. It is also of crucial importance in defining the trajectories and potential 'partners' of international aid. In development education programmes, which aim to be platforms to promote global connectivity, the choice of topics and the regions covered is highly selective, pointing to the regions that aid activists want to define as in need of their intervention. In the Polish case, these programmes are particularly concerned with Africa. According to aid activists, Polish history has been separated from African issues, so development education programmes use the power of the aid gaze to create a missing connection with the imagined, distant, African needy. Their aim is to construct feelings of interconnectivity. Envisaged as a 'non-place', in these programmes Africa is rendered into a place in need of aid.

Such a strong emphasis on Africa and the omission of other regions from the debate results in aid issues being linked exclusively to this continent. Effectively, development education programmes become platforms for generating public support for Polish involvement in Africa – a trajectory that coincides with the interests of a small but growing cohort of Polish Afrophiles and the priorities of Western aid providers orchestrating the foreign activities of the EU.

Notes

1. See http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=410&w=70738735&v=2& s=0 (accessed 1 August 2019).
2. This definition, propagated by the Centre of Civic Education, was agreed upon in 2010 by the inter-sectoral team of teachers, pedagogical consultants and advisors, representatives of the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, scholars and NGOs who were involved in orchestrating the memorandum of understanding signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Education and the Zagranica Group concerning the promotion of global education in Poland. See http://zagranica.org.pl/baza-wiedzy/cz%C4%99sto-zadawane-pytania/ czym-jest-edukacja-globalna (accessed 28 July 2019).
3. A notable exception is the Education for Democracy Foundation. This organisation mostly operates in the East of Poland, but has been one of the most vocal proponents of global education in the country. Its interest in this topic can be explained through the 'educational' angle of the organisation, as it was originally set up to support reforms of the education system in Poland. Its interest in foreign aid came later.
4. See http://zagranica.org.pl/baza-wiedzy/cz%C4%99sto-zadawane-pyta nia/czym-jest-edukacja-globalna (accessed 28 July 2019).
5. See https://kapuscinskilectures.eu/about/ (accessed 28 July 2019).
6. In the 2011 census, 682 people identified themselves as Nigerians, 580 as Egyptians and 507 as Tunisians. All other African nationalities were reported at such low levels that they were placed in the generic category of 'other – non Polish'. A total of 97.6 per cent of the population of 38.5 million identifies as ethnically Polish (Główny Urząd Statystyczny [GUS] 2011).
7. The success of this village and its popularity among regional schools resulted in the growth of the programme. By 2011, the African village had become just one of the many representatives of various continents contained in this educational park.

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4

The Moral Economy of Foreign Aid
Religion and Institutions

I embarked on the Sudanese leg of my fieldwork together with the president of the PAIN, Wanda, and another member of the organisation, Hanna. We got on a plane early one morning in Warsaw, and after one stop-over and a 13-hour direct flight we finally arrived at Entebbe international airport. Our next plane was scheduled for the next day. It was after midnight and the arrivals lounge was quickly becoming empty. People were rushing to their homes or local hotels to get some sleep before further travels. But Wanda was not going anywhere. When I asked what the plan was, she gave me a stern look. 'What did I expect? A night in a hotel? There are better ways to spend money than on unjustified luxuries. If the people we are going to help have no roofs over their heads, why should we? If I can't spend a night sleeping rough in the airport, how do I expect to survive in the bush or in highly insecure Bor?' Wanda picked up her large backpack and began to wander around the airport. Hanna and I followed her apathetically. Finally, she stopped under a staircase and decided that this would be our den for the night.

As we lay down on the floor, I tried to get some sleep. It did not cross my mind to question Wanda's decision not to go to a hotel. I was in research mode, and I wanted a proper participant observation experience rather than pushing my own ideas. Moreover, as a student – a student from Poland, from a middle-income family – I was simply used to travelling on a budget, always searching for ways to cut expenses, so the idea of sleeping in the airport did not sound unreasonable. But this journey was different. We were on the move

not as tourists, eager to see the world, but as professionals, able to manage our professional budgets in such a way as to allow for one night in a hotel, especially when the prices were far lower than those we knew in Europe. So what was going on here? Was it Wanda's way of being a *good* humanitarian, leading a frugal life, ready to make sacrifices? Or was it perhaps a matter of habit, a behaviour shaped by past experiences of living in a constant economic crisis, permanently geared towards saving? At the time I was not sure, but the events of the following days helped me to see the larger picture and to contextualise this event.

The next day we finally arrived in Juba. At the airport we were greeted by Marcel, the head of the PAIN mission in South Sudan. Before we travelled to the Greater Upper Nile region, we had to spend few days in Juba in order to arrange visas, work permits and to buy some supplies for the office. We spent the days driving between shops, state offices and banks. We were in a constant rush, running from one place to another, waiting in endless queues, and rushing again to another institution. The weekend promised to be a bit more relaxing, but on Sunday Wanda said she would like to go to church. It was not a suggestion; she was not gauging the interest among other staff members or assessing her options. Her 'I would like to go to church…' strongly resonated with my memories of childhood Sundays and equivalent conversations with my mum, aunt or grandma, in which *I* meant *we*, and everything seemed certain; there was no room for negotiation. At the same time, Wanda's announcement surprised me. I knew she was Catholic, but I also remembered her repeated statement in which she emphasised the secular character of the PAIN work, and her guidelines for staff members in which she strongly recommended that aid workers should not manifest their religious affiliations in any way due to the 'neutrality standard'. Even wearing small crucifix necklaces or pendants were discouraged. Now, she was openly suggesting a trip to church. Other staff members did not seem very excited by the idea. Marcel respectfully declined; I waited to see what Hanna would do. She eventually decided to go. It was her first time in Sudan and she felt that it might be a good opportunity to experience the local culture. I followed suit. Even though Marcel had been working in the region for a while now, he had no idea where the Catholic church was, so he did what most other expatriates do on such occasions and called another aid worker, Jakub, to ask for directions. Jakub ran the other Polish organisation operating in South Sudan. Marcel contacted him not only because of the Polish connection and Jakub's familiarity with Juba, but also because Jakub

cooperated with Catholic nuns on a daily basis, helping them to rebuild their school. We soon had the information we needed, and went to church. It turned out to be on one of the main streets.

Once we got there, Wanda quickly found her way through the crowd and sat by the altar. I followed Hanna. It was hot, and the church was not significantly different from those we knew at home. It seemed like there was nothing exciting awaiting us, so gradually losing our enthusiasm, we decided to sit outside. Together we sat on the benches in front of the church, participating in the service from there. Once the Mass was over, we went to look for Wanda. It took a while before we found her outside. She was surrounded by nuns. Hanna and I waited for her to one side. After fifteen minutes it became clear that Wanda was not ready to leave the church any time soon. In fact, she asked for a meeting with the priest. Half an hour later, we found ourselves sitting in the porch of his office, with Wanda asking dozens of questions about the politics, life, history, economy and needs of the local people and noting down all the answers our hosts gave her. She was a religious person, but this visit to a local church was no longer an expression of her religiosity. It became a kind of needs assessment in which the priest and nuns played an important role as trustworthy local informants. For more than an hour, she asked them hundreds of questions about local life: what is life like here, what are the main issues, what are people's main needs? How many children go to school? How much does it cost to send a child to school? How much on average do people earn? How much do basic goods cost? How is the health care system here?

So, what does our sleepover at the airport have to do with the church visit and meeting with the priest? Seemingly nothing, but as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the two events are the best exemplification of the ways in which Catholic values and institutions shape Poland's emergence as a donor. At Entebbe airport, when Wanda was justifying her decision not to check into a hotel, she evoked very specific values: she talked about sacrifice and the ability to endure suffering while working for others. These are not random, neutral values, but very culturally specific qualities promoted by the Catholic Church as characteristics of good and charitable Christians. And Wanda did not evoke them in a conversation with random people, but with two women who, like her, were brought up and socialised in a society heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. Talking in simple terms, we shared a cultural background and she knew which of our buttons to push to trigger the desired results. This does not mean her actions were calculated. We all shared a certain

cultural code. No convincing was needed, no debate took place. Neither I nor my colleague questioned her reasoning; we took it for granted and quickly internalised her decision to sleep in the airport. It seemed 'natural' and 'normal' that aid workers should sacrifice themselves, that we should lead frugal lives. It was 'the right thing to do' – the link between Catholic values and aid practice was invisible, but particularly strong and effective in mobilising a specific type of humanitarian behaviour. The church visit, on the other hand, was not hidden. In fact, it was to some degree ostentatious, but was rendered into a professional experience in which the Catholic priest worked as a source of professional authority on aid-related topics. While it started as a personal religious act, it ended as a professional and official practice. These two experiences demonstrate in a nutshell how Polish aid practice is intertwined with the Catholic Church. For Polish emerging aid actors, Catholic stakeholders became gatekeepers to locations and communities in Africa. The values promoted by the Church also impacted heavily on the ways in which aid to Africa and aid moralities were defined.

In our conversations, Wanda openly admitted that her charitable practice (and consequently her decision to start an NGO) was strongly informed by her active involvement in Catholic communities. In her teenage years she belonged to the Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej (KIK – an organisation grouping Polish Catholic Intellectuals). She attributed her social formation to the time she spent in the organisation, the readings of *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* – Catholic journals considered a progressive voice of the Catholics in Poland.

While not many NGO workers shared her values, her story was not exceptional. Significantly, Janina Ochojska also repeatedly stated that her need to help was fostered by her Catholic upbringing and the mentorship of prominent priests (see also Ochojska and Bonowicz 2000). She was not only an engaged Catholic, but had also benefited from Church support. In 1994, the Catholic journal *Tygodnik Powszechny* awarded her the Order of Saint George for her social activism. Michał Okoński, a young journalist from *Tygodnik*, interviewed her on this occasion. Some two years later, in a small church in Toruń, Janina Ochojska and Michał Okoński were married at a Mass conducted by the priest Adam Boniecki (an editor in chief of the journal). Among other awards, she also received the Pax Christi (in 1995), an award given by the global Catholic peace movement. On that occasion she travelled to Italy and was granted an audience with John Paul II. In her own account of the event, she remembers this special encounter with the Pope: 'Suddenly the Pope asked me:

"Was it you who was in Chechnya?" I was shocked. I didn't realise that he knew all about it. I told him what it is like in Chechnya, and I left with the feeling that we have his blessing' (Steciuk and Szczygieł 2002: 81). Janka was very proud of such moments, and never hid her Catholic affiliations. Religion was clearly important for her and provided an important framework for meaning in her life and work. In a 2011 interview with the colourful tabloid-style magazine *Party* (Pawełek 2011), she recounted a serious incident that occurred during her humanitarian work in Bosnia:

> When in 1994 we were coming back from Sarajevo, our convoy came under attack. We fell into a 70m deep abyss. As we were falling, I thought what a pity it's the end. But the car stopped on the rock. The bonnet opened and we got stuck at 15 metres. I only had some bruises and a purple bum. It's an absolute miracle. Then I thought, God still wants me for something more. Not even two months later, nine Frenchmen in an armoured car fell there and died. Nobody survived.

In this interview Janka mentioned God a number of times, in relation to work, dealing with hardships and managing life's difficulties. When she discussed her health issues – she was a polio survivor –, her struggle to walk and the possibility that she might soon need to use a wheelchair, her faith was once again an important point of reference: 'Miracles happen. I was just in South Sudan when the Holy Father [John Paul II] was beatified. I am certain that He will help me. I don't know in what, or how, I do not even want to imagine that'. But she did have faith. Importantly, both in her and Wanda's case, as well as other aid workers I met in the course of my fieldwork who expressed strong Christian beliefs, the active manifestation of their religious affiliations contrasted markedly with their public declarations of the non-religious character of their NGOs and their actions.

In this chapter I wish to make sense of this declarative secular character of the PAIN and other organisations on the one hand, and the strong connectivity with the Polish Catholic Church and the Polish variant of Catholicism on the other. What role do Church and religion play in Poland's emergence as a donor? The way in which most academic research on aid is carried out suggests that there is a clear-cut division in the aid world between secular and religious organisations. They are usually analysed separately. The literature on aid, but also a popular view among Aid Land professionals, suggests the existence of two parallel worlds, one driven by 'secular', 'rational' organisations, and the world of religious charities in which aid and faith are inseparable. Most studies of development omit

religion from their analysis, focusing predominantly on politics and economics. Recently, however, there has been some movement suggesting a growing interest in investigating the role of religion in aid (Barnett and Stein 2012; Calderisi 2013; Blackman 2018). However, most studies that consider the religious aspects of aid still examine it as a special case rather than as part of the mainstream (Hunt 2000; Belshaw, Calderisi, and Sugden 2001; Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2003; Benthall 2006; Clarke 2007; Marshall and Van Saanen 2007; Pelkmans 2007, 2009). Another approach focuses on societies that are 'to be developed', asking how religious beliefs impact their attitudes towards aid. Do various churches support social change, or do they hinder the eradication of poverty (Coleman 2000)? Such confinement of the religious angle solely to the analysis of communities in the Global South, and the concurrent lack of analogous concerns with donor institutions and societies in the North, risks reproduction of the myths of modernity based on the traditional–modern, religious–secular, private–public oppositions.

I must admit that at the beginning of my research I was also tempted to believe in this image. It was only reinforced by Polish aid workers who were clearly divided along secular–religious lines. For instance, the PAIN forged hardly any partnerships with religious organisations, while it actively cooperated with other 'secular' NGOs. Similarly, Church organisations have never been very engaged in the Zagranica Group, and refrained from any collective campaigns organised by other organisations operating abroad. All PAIN workers with whom I had a chance to talk – both in Warsaw and in South Sudan – stressed that they had chosen to work in this organisation exactly because of its lack of links with the Church. I witnessed them screening applications from candidates willing to join the organisation for any signs of religious zeal or missionary call. Those applicants who admitted religious motivations were rejected on the grounds that they did not match the organisational profile. It was easy to believe that religion had nothing to do with Polish aid and the activities of secular organisations. It was confirmed in both the material I was collecting in the first stages of my fieldwork and in the state-of-the art studies of international aid.

As Bornstein (2005: 3) points out, however, this particular anti-religion machine in the development industry can be attributed to Enlightenment thought and its rejection of the historical link between theology and economics. Since this era, which proclaimed the victory of reason, the Western world has promoted the modernisation of religion, and its separation (as a deeply irrational invention) from

all domains associated with reason and modernity. Development, as the pet project of modernity, subscribes to and replicates this general rhetoric, including its troubled relationship with religion. As pointed out by Lambek (2010), in today's Western world the subject of 'ethics' is pushed into the domain that is loosely defined as 'secular', and under new religiously neutral names (human rights, citizenship, redistributive justice, basic needs) is linked to law and regulations. But historically, ethics has been closely related to religion, and through it has been intellectualised, materialised and transcended. It should therefore come as no surprise that many aid organisations around the world either have their roots in religious movements or were set up by people with strong religious convictions. For instance, Oxfam, one of the most influential organisations of our time, has roots linking it to religious thought. As insiders Vaux and Vaux (2001: 15) report, 'until the 1980s, individual Quakers had a powerful impact on the ethos and philosophy of Oxfam – particularly the concept of respect for individuals in their own right'. Similarly, Amnesty International had Christian roots. Its founder, Peter Berenson, was a convert to Catholicism, and his close associate, Eric Baker, was a Quaker (Calderisi 2013: 81). As Hearn (2002) observes, examining the case of Kenya, religious institutions often dominate or even hold regional monopolies over services (health care and education in particular) which at present constitute the heart of developmental interests and the aid industry (cf. Flessa 2005). Catholic and Protestant networks often play advocacy roles at international forums, as was the case of international debt relief during the Jubilee 2000 campaign (Wuthnow and Lewis 2008). Moreover, churches become officially recognised partners for such aid superpowers as the World Bank (Belshaw, Calderisi and Sugden 2001). Finally, religious organisations themselves enjoy the status of powerful actors. In Ireland, they practically hold a monopoly over the foreign aid industry. In the UK, Catholic CAFOD and Christian Aid play key roles in the British Overseas Aid Group (BOAG). In Sweden, in 2005, the share of tax-funded NGO aid going through Christian organisations was about 40 per cent; in the USA it was approximately 20 per cent (Bengtsson 2013: 482).

Clearly, the relationship between religion and the aid industry is very strong. While Pelkmans (2009: 438) points out the existence of a 'parallel' aid world in which aid and faith are inseparable, with this chapter I want to suggest that the relationship between religion and international aid is much broader and deeper, and rather than being parallel, it is mainstream. I am not the first to make such a suggestion.

Bornstein (2005: 170) argues that 'the discourse that fuels a good deal of global humanitarian aid is neither neutral nor secular; it is often Christian'. Her stand is echoed by Fassin (2012), who in his work on humanitarian reason aims to trace the philosophical, political and religious roots of the contemporary humanitarian government. Lisa Malkki (2015), in her study of the Finnish Red Cross – an organisation that champions a neutral and secular standpoint – does not take for granted the self-reporting secularism of aid workers, and tries to push this topic further. She argues that Christianity, 'with all of its structures of feeling and moral economies, is implicit in many (although by no means all) contemporary humanitarian practices and expectations' (Malkki 2015: 97). However, while noting that Finland is formally a Lutheran country, the actual secular character of the society suggests that there are other, non-Christian elements in Finnish politics and domestic cultures of charity that impact 'the need to help' more strongly than religion.

Both Malkki and Bornstein are interested in examining the motivations of people who are involved in foreign aid. They follow the logic that the difference between secular and faith-based aid organisations is located in the motivations and the wish of aid workers to emulate Jesus Christ in processes of aid, the attention to spiritual as well as material poverty (Bornstein 2005: 47). While I agree that motivations are important, they are only part of the story, perhaps most visible for the researcher and those aid workers who are asked about their professional experiences. But what if some of the reasons for choosing a career in aid are not so conscious, and instead are more hidden, implicit? Malkki argues that this is exactly the nature of the relationship between religion and foreign aid. Still, very little actual work has been done to make these implicit connections explicit, and to pinpoint specific examples of action or narratives that reflect particular forms of religiosity and religious beliefs in mainstream, 'secular' aid organisations. This omission is particularly surprising given our knowledge of the ways in which religion, specifically Christianity, has shaped Western economies (Weber 1976; Sahlins et al. 1996; Applbaum 1998). If religion had such an important role in shaping our economic culture, why have we neglected its role in forming the moral economy of the aid industry?

One possible reason is that such studies are particularly difficult. As Barnett points out, Catholic organisations were always very careful in playing out their Catholicism in public (Barnett and Stein 2012). The veiling of religious connotations is further strengthened by the regimes of neutrality in aid that promote non-religious

approaches to international assistance (Pelkmans 2007, 2009). The tainted history of Christianity, its involvement in colonialism, but also standards of modernity that labelled religion as irrational and churches (especially Catholic) as conservative institutions preventing progress, further support the masking of all religious elements and church connotations within the foreign aid industry.

This is exactly why religion became so invisible to me in the first stages of my research. Aware of all these conditions, and struggling to establish themselves as respectful aid actors, especially in regard to their Western colleagues, Polish aid workers were making every effort to follow the paths set up by 'established donors' and to meet the standards of 'rational', 'professional', 'neutral' and 'modern' aid – cleansed of religious zeal, driven by 'humanitarian' rather than religious ethics. This need to disavow any connection with religion was further strengthened by the external perception of Poland as a Catholic country – an image that was often a reason for mockery and led to stereotypical images of Polish society as homogenous, conservative and backward, uncritically following the Church.[1] Polish aid workers were well aware of this image, and in trying to build their position among Western aid providers they worked hard to distance themselves from it. This resulted in a situation where the less religious aid workers strongly distanced themselves from the Church and Catholicism, while the more religious individuals consciously avoided any references to the Church in their conversations. Even when I talked to aid workers who were involved with religious NGOs, or with priests running the same institutions, they never spontaneously mentioned God or Jesus, or referred to Christian values or Jesus's calling. For all external partners who might evaluate or judge their work, they very carefully crafted their image as stakeholders whose religious affiliations were a private matter, having nothing to do with their international engagements. I have no reason to think this was disingenuous. And I do think that most of them *believed* that their aid practice had nothing to do with religion. But I do find it important to ask whether and how religious ideas infiltrated people's ideas about aid work, and what role the Polish variant of Catholicism played in nurturing specific ideas about aid.

While sitting on the fence in deciding whether religion is important for Finnish aid workers, Malkki decided to dismiss religion due to the strong secular character of this Nordic society. Sitting on the same fence during my own research (see note 1), I decided to lean to the other side. After all, Poland's position as one of the most religious European societies is well documented (Ramet and Borowik 2016;

WIN-Gallup International 2012). In this chapter I will therefore unpack the ways in which specifically Polish-Catholic beliefs and ontologies impact the emerging moral economy of Polish foreign aid. I will also demonstrate how Polish aid is influenced by the Catholic Church at the institutional level. In the previous chapter, I focused on the efforts of aid workers to create a new sort of morality aimed at generating support for aid to Africa. I demonstrated how, in order to generate public interest in the issues concerned with global poverty, developers produce a discourse that conceptualises assistance in terms of moral obligations and global connectivity. In this chapter I want to ask whether and how those supposedly secular, modernist moralities are shaped by religious ideas of charity. How are aid sensibilities coarsened or heightened with respect to the Polish variant of Catholicism? How closely are aid and religion interconnected? My intention is not to purify religious moralities or to delimit the prominence of religious beliefs in the industry, but to recognise the religious dimensions of aid practice (Lambek 2010). As I will demonstrate, the application of Christian phenomenology in the foreign aid industry is what makes it so appealing to members of Catholic society, and allows the establishment of aid organisations and institutions despite a general lack of interest in global issues, and existing domestic social and economic problems. It is through the mobilisation of Christian symbols and values that the aid discourse becomes (at least to some extent) effective in Polish society, and facilitates public support for the country's emergence as a donor. Furthermore, I will show how strongly the national discourses supporting Polish foreign involvement, in the case of the African trajectory, are being played out through linking aid activities to the presence of Polish missionaries on that continent. As I will argue, it is the presence of Polish Catholic missionaries that enabled aid activists to access African locations, and consequently emerge as donors in that region.

Historical Background: Linking Church, Charity, Nationalism and Africa in Poland

My understanding of the role of Catholicism and the Catholic Church in shaping the foreign aid industry in Poland only became possible once I left Sudan. A move away from the locations in which projects are implemented allowed me to see foreign aid not as a special practice happening 'elsewhere', but rather a practice very strongly rooted in the domestic realities of Poland. In the first

chapter I demonstrated the impact of internal politics and the global geo-economy on Poland's emergence as a donor. Here I want to unpack some of the cultural factors influencing the ways in which aid institutions were established, the first projects they designed and how public support for foreign involvement was mobilised. To understand how this process takes place, it is necessary to position foreign aid in the wider, historical context of national charitable and philanthropic practices.

In the previous chapter I argued that Poland's history of social activism was rooted in the idea of 'organic work'. An aim of this movement was to mobilise elites and get them involved in educating the lower classes, particularly peasants, in order to increase the potential of the society as a whole. The goal was to focus not on military resistance (which despite numerous attempts was failing), but on creating a strong society, which by thriving intellectually and economically would be able to resist oppression and maintain national sovereignty. Within this movement, the focus was not so much on the eradication of poverty as on creating structures that would foster an educated society and preserve Polish national culture. Special organisations and fundraising campaigns emerged in order to support schools, science societies, youth organisations and cultural institutions. But as Leś (2000, 2001) observes, Polish charitable practice is also very strongly related to the Catholic Church and nationalism. Consequently, Polish philanthropy is tightly linked to religious concepts, national ideology and class issues. From the nineteenth century, especially after the Partitions of Poland between Prussia, Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, charitable practices became strongly related to national sovereignty movements, in which the Catholic Church played a significant role. The popular stereotype of the Catholic Pole (Polak-Katolik), originally born in the seventeenth century, was strongly reinforced at the time of the Partitions in regard to Russian Orthodoxy and Prussian Protestantism (Janion 2006). It was also at this time that the link between Catholicism and Polish national identity was consolidated.

This process continued through the interwar period. However, it took on a slightly new form after the establishment of the socialist regime in Poland. In the Polish People's Republic, responsibility for social work was taken over by the state. In light of the socialist ideology, which linked the problem of poverty to the persistence of classes and social inequalities, all philanthropic activities were treated by the state with reservation, as a form of sustaining class division (Geremek 1989: 292). Officially, social care became the duty of the state. Most

of the charitable, religious organisations were outlawed. However, some independent initiatives were undertaken by private citizens. These networks of support were usually linked with opposition movements and the Catholic Church. In the 1980s, when the severe economic and political crisis hit the country, and when foreign aid started to reach Poles, the special Charity Commission of the Polish Episcopate was established to represent the Polish assistance network and act as a recipient, independent from the state, representing Polish society. Effectively, just like in the nineteenth century, it was again the Catholic Church that to a large extent became responsible for the distribution of aid (Frilit 1991; Kreihs 2007). Through this historical process, the linkage between charitable practice, nationalism and the Church only became stronger and further naturalised. As I will show in the following sections, this link proved crucial for Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa, and the ways in which foreign aid is conceptualised and practised.

The Church not only played a significant role in shaping the moral economy of foreign aid. It also played an important role in shaping the trajectories and logistics of Polish–African development relations. The importance of the Church in this aspect of Polish history is reflected in the numbers. In the early stages of Poland's emergence as a donor, missionaries constituted the largest representation of Polish citizens living and working in Africa (Knopek 2008). In 2010, there were approximately two thousand Polish missionaries spread around the world, almost half of them working in Africa (Komisja Episkopatu Polski ds Misji 2010). They not only constituted the majority of Poles working and living in African countries, but also enjoyed strong and positive publicity in Poland for their international involvement. Their activities were discussed not only in Church circles but also in the public media, schools and universities. Significantly, their evangelisation work was usually overshadowed by discussion of their social work. As a result, these men and women were often perceived as aid workers rather than religious agents. In this context, amid no other tangible presence of Polish stakeholders in Africa, the continent became associated in the popular imagination with the work of 'Polish missionaries' (or 'our missionaries', as they are talked about in Poland).

In the mid 2000s, when Poland's emergence as a donor was consolidating, in spite of a progressive decline in Catholic Church membership, approximately 80 per cent of the population still identified as Catholic, and almost 40 per cent participated weekly in Sunday services (Wiśniewska 2011). Even though many of my informants

did not actively participate in the Church as adults, they had been socialised and brought up in this highly Catholic environment, in which for the last two centuries social and charitable practice has been linked with the Catholic Church and nationalism, and in which it has been missionaries, not NGOs or state institutions, that were associated with Africa and the pursuit of aid there.

Emerging as a Donor: The Catholic Church and the Moral Economy of Aid to Africa

Very few aid workers I met, especially among the younger generation, openly admitted that religion impacted their aid trajectory. Only a few, like Sylwia, a woman in her mid twenties who had started her own small NGO providing scholarships to the youth in one African country, admitted that faith had been important in her life and influenced her decision to get involved in aid. However, even she was not comfortable discussing this topic. When discussing the issue, she emphasised how religion was a private matter for her, and she would distance herself from the Church, emphasising that she had no interest in the Catholic institution: 'In my family there was no church tradition … Faith, religiosity that is something that is mine [very personal], fully independent from the Church'. Yet when she had the idea to go abroad and do aid work, she directed her first steps towards Catholic organisations. To her it seemed there were no other options. She knew she wanted to go to Africa, and the Church seemed like the only actor in Poland operating in that field. Another option was applying to the UN, but that was out of her reach. The process of identifying the right organisation progressed slowly. Whoever she called, they would ask her if she was a nun or if she would like to become one. Finally, she got in touch with Don Bosco, and even though she said that its religious affiliation was not decisive for her, 'it was important that there was some greater idea behind it … It is quite intimate what I am talking about now, but indeed, it was fulfilling my faith and that was a plus'. Sylwia was an independent spirit, so after her Don Bosco experience she started her own organisation, eager to continue her aid work on her own terms. Her organisation was in no way affiliated with the Catholic Church, but it was established in a partnership with another friend who identified as Catholic and who was very religious.

A different path towards the aid industry is presented by Julia, who also started her journey with Don Bosco, but as she said, her

formation started when she was still in primary school. Her parents
sent her to a summer camp organised by her parish, known as
'Summer with Missions'. She enjoyed the camp and went every year
until she was seventeen. It was a ten-day camp that took place in a
different location each year. As she told me:

> People talk there about missions. Missionaries come as well and some
> Africans, or Filipinos, and they just talk. And this is where I got this
> missionary spirit. … This is where I became interested in Africa …. I
> was a tiny kid, it must have been in 1997 … I was ten years old … And
> I went every year, and somehow ever since I had an interest in Africa. I
> even chose to make a presentation about Africa as part of my final exams
> (matura) in high school … They brought me up in this missionary way …
> But you know, it was funny, because the guy who was on my exam com-
> mittee and was asking me questions regarding this presentation, said: 'Ms.
> I have only one question to you: when are you planning to go to Africa?'
> and I tell him: 'Well, sir, I don't know … it depends…', and then he said
> that unless I told him when, he wouldn't pass me. So I said I would try as
> soon as possible, and one year later I was on a plane.

Such summer and winter camps are organised by every diocese in
the country. A moderate number of children and young people par-
ticipate annually in such events. For instance, in Tarnowska Diocese
(which has the highest proportion in the country of people declar-
ing their Catholic faith), each year approximately five hundred
young people take part in such camps (Czernak 2004). Yet such
initiatives constitute only one of many platforms through which
young and older Poles can learn about the work of missionaries,
but also, as Julia emphasised, about distant locations and the lives
of the people living there. Across the country, various dioceses have
special missionary centres that organise annual 'Missionary Days'
and 'Schools of Missionary Animation' (*Szkoły Animacji Misyjnej*).
Such initiatives involve seminars and lectures about missionary
theology and methods of missionary work. They also organise
public meetings with missionaries themselves. Furthermore, at the
parish level, special groups and societies of 'Friends of Missions' are
organised especially for young children. Their meetings are organ-
ised in a way that resembles scout groups. Children collect badges
and awards, which are thematically linked to the work of mission-
aries. Through this process, organised as play, they learn about the
evangelical mission of the Catholic Church, but also distant regions
and people living across the globe. Even at this early stage, their
aid gaze is already being shaped, as the topics discussed in these
meetings are often arranged around issues crucial to aid – they

focus on the needs of certain locations: access to water, poverty, education and so on (Janus et al. 2004). Children participating in such programmes receive special *matricula*, where collections of badges and new tasks are recorded. With these notebooks, 'a child is "travelling" through continents, undertaking prayers, sacrifice and renouncement for his peers. Through fulfilling tasks described in *matricula*, he learns about the life of children from missionary countries and deepens his faith …. The prize for the one who collects badges from all continents is a Passport Without Borders' (Janus et al. 2004: 22–23). Clearly, the work of such groups is not only aimed at evangelical missions, but promotes the idea that missionary work is a philanthropic endeavour, and that distant societies are awaiting their help.

The work of such societies is supported by national missionary centres such as the Polish Episcopate Commission for Missionary Issues, its special division Ad Gentes, Congregations for the Evangelisation of the Peoples, and the Pontifical Mission Societies. But missionaries and the Catholic Church also have other platforms that allow them to influence the general public outside of their parishes. From the 1990s, Catholic education was brought into preschools and schools. This education is not obligatory, but institutional and social barriers impede the process of opting out. The Church also has a strong share in the country's media industry. It owns publishing houses and tens of local and national newspapers and journals. A few among them are dedicated specifically to the work of missionaries.[2] There are more than twenty-five local Catholic radio stations in Poland. TV Trwam was established in 2003 (connected to the prominent Radio Maryja) (Pędziwiatr 2015). The Church also has access to state-owned national radio and television, a prerogative secured in 1993 through the concordat between the Holy See and Poland. While many organisations in Poland have the ability to foster a specific version of the moral economy of foreign aid (see previous chapter), due to the number of outlets that the Church owns and to which it has access, it holds a comparative advantage over other organisations, and even the state. This specific context allows us to further reinforce the idea that the most important link connecting Poland and distant societies is made through the Church and missionaries. It also promotes certain, specifically Catholic variants of aid philosophy and ethics.

No other denomination in Poland has comparable access to the media and public institutions. Secular organisations interested in promoting aid issues can only dream of accessing such platforms.

In this setting, Catholic organisations have an unparalleled impact on the opinions that their congregation members (but also, as we saw in the case of Sylwia, other citizens) hold about foreign aid. Wuthnow and Lewis (2008: 194) observed, discussing the American context, that 'congregational leaders initiate programmes that aim explicitly to shape congregants' attitudes' on charity and foreign aid. A similar point is made by Tonkin, who, referring to Irish Catholic congregations, concludes that they are nurturing 'romantic dreams of the "lands" where the missionaries would minister' (Tonkin 2009: 176). Similar processes can be observed in Poland, yet here the scope of religious institutions' influence exceeds congregational circles. Through their access not only to the tight networks of parishes, but also the media and schools, their power to influence the public moves far beyond congregants. The Catholic religion is a very powerful agent of socialisation in Poland. Due to its vast access to various institutions and media, the Catholic Church has a tremendous influence on Polish society as a whole, regardless of individual religious affiliations. It plays a role in shaping people's ideas not only about what is right and wrong, but also about the world at large. Accordingly, it contributes to the shaping of the popular imagination about helping others, the Global South and foreign aid: why, where, how and by whom it should be done.

The Fallen World and the Obligation to Assist Distant Strangers

Through the pedagogical tools described above, the Church becomes a formative centre aiming to foster compassionate Christians who care not only about societies at home but also distant strangers. On the surface, the aid gaze promoted by the Polish Catholic Church does not differ greatly from other stereotypical aid discourses that emphasise difference and poverty, that see the world in hierarchical, evolutionary terms, and which are described at length by other researchers (Escobar 1995; Gallagher 2009). However, unlike other Polish players (NGOs, but even the highly contested and mistrusted MFA) who promote their vision of aid, the Church speaks from a position of power. Given its dominant position in Poland, it basically has a monopoly in shaping the moral economy. Through its dogmatic and non-relativist stand, it gives its own representations the power of 'truth'. The opinions voiced in the Catholic media, expressed by priests and nuns from behind the altar and school podiums, are

represented as undebatable facts. Secondly, the mediation of the aid gaze with Catholic references results in a very specific reaction. It triggers the reaction that is expected from a good Christian – a feeling of compassion (rather than anger, frustration or indifference). Furthermore, it promotes charity as a solution to global problems (rather than, for instance, political involvement). This specifically Catholic version of charity, together with romanticised compassion, plays an important role in shaping Polish aid and Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa.

As Flessa (2005) explains, the theological principles of Christian charity are based on the perception of the world as imperfect, as a fallen world. As a consequence of this view, Catholics must take care of those poor and vulnerable who suffer the hardships of the imperfect world. But the normalisation of misery, its naturalisation as an inherent part of the social order, masks the role of people and states in shaping this miserable reality, and suggests that existing problems are almost impossible to change. The only solution left is charitable action, external aid, rather than political action or transformation of existing economic orders.

It is exactly this logic that at the earliest stages of Poland's emergence as a donor provided the basis for the supposedly secular discourses on international aid. It was especially visible in the ways in which novice NGOs tried to justify their actions in African countries, often making dramatic pleas for funding:

> … there is probably no bigger necessity than care for vulnerable people. Often they are abandoned because they bring no benefits to the family and instead are a burden. But also, most of the families here are completely hopeless. The region is completely forgotten. The village is located in the bush. There is no electricity. People have no resources to live on. There is no work. There are no prospects for normal living. People are abandoned and left on their own. [This new project] would be a sort of miracle for the local people. For them, the involvement of any organisation in the area equals protection of their daily lives, development of the village and the region. Everyone is praying for our arrival. … We believe that with the aid of sensitive and reasonable people, it will be possible to open the centre as soon as possible. Here, not much is needed to arrange things. The locals are very helpful and generous. However, it depends solely on this funding whether the project is realised.[3]

This description was written by a secular NGO, but the discourse it employs echoes very strongly the language known from Catholic sermons and media. Just like Catholic charity, this philanthropic endeavour's primary goal was to evoke feelings of empathy – though

this time obviously not among the general public or Catholic audiences but among the ministerial evaluators who allocate funding. Importantly, the evaluators were not only to be mobilised by what in the Catholic context seemed like self-evident images and metaphors of suffering of the poor. The authors are also attempting to foster feelings of guilt among decision makers, suggesting their responsibility for the future of a chosen community if they reject the application.

This shift in emphasis, from the 'deserving poor' and their suffering to donors, transforms a foreign problem into an issue of global solidarity. Again, this move is not culturally or morally neutral. It echoes Catholic ideas about missionary work, which organise it around three types of sacrifice: that of the poor, that of congregations and that of missionaries (Urban 2004). This specific conceptualisation of missionary work can be directly translated into the ways in which foreign aid was envisioned in Poland during its emergence as a donor in Africa.

The Sacrifice of the Poor

Firstly, in order to justify foreign engagement, the suffering and sacrifice of the poor becomes a central feature around which aid discourses concerning Africa are organised. This is particularly clear in the project described above, when the emphasis is on the suffering of people, but also when villagers are defined as generous, ready to make further sacrifices. Such conceptualisations result in images of 'idealised poverty', a representation that focuses solely on hardship, in which poverty is imagined as material deprivation and lack of social and emotional wealth. At the same time, the image of 'locals' as those who 'suffer' evokes ideas of their supposed innocence and authenticity: these are good, 'generous' people, *a deserving poor*, who with hope await assistance. What is reproduced here is a bare life, the image of *pure* victims waiting for some sort of *miracle*. This perspective defines subjects of aid as 'the poor' with no other identity; they are reduced to victimhood. They are the new *homo sacer*, the bare victim placed outside of polity (Korf 2007: 370). They are cursed and holy at the same time.

Such a conceptualisation of poverty is not exclusive to Poland, but the unpacking of Poland's emergence as a donor allows us to see how these supposedly secular, though moral ideas about poverty are shaped and what their genealogy is. In the case of Poland's emergence as a donor in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the issues

of poverty are barely tackled. The kind of imaginary in which suffering plays a central role is very rare, and applied mostly in the context of humanitarian crises. Instead, the focus is on politics, civil society, democratisation, state administration and so on. This shows that it is possible to offer alternative aid discourses that are not centred around suffering. The difference between descriptions of Eastern European and Central Asian locations on the one side and African societies on the other cannot be attributed to some objective 'truths' about poverty or human suffering. The list of the top ten poorest countries in the world includes both African states (Uganda, Mozambique, DR Congo, Tanzania) and Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan). The difference between these imaginaries, therefore, lies not in what is seen, but in who makes the observation and what their relationship with those societies is. As I showed in Chapter 1, Eastern Europe and Central Asia belong to the wider geopolitical imaginary in Poland. They fit into global scapes (Appadurai 1996) that are visible from Poland. Their history, culture, politics and economies are somehow interweaved with national ideologies, and aid relations are simply a new incarnation of these relationships. In the case of African–Polish relations, there is no such connectivity. The aid relation is the reason for rather than a consequence of the existing relationship. It needs to be created, and in the absence of any other viable genealogies (the only alternatives are those offered by development education, discussed in the previous chapter), religion offers the most effective grounding. In the case of aid discourses concerning Africa, the emphasis on suffering is not incidental but a simple reflection of the nature of the relationship that linked Poland and African countries in the 1990s and 2000s and which at that time was strongly mediated by the Church, specifically missionaries. Moreover, unlike national ideology, which fuelled Polish aid towards Eastern European and Central Asian countries, but which has been strongly rooted in a particular regional context, Christian theology, which provided the backbone for the moral economy of aid to Africa, is universal in nature. It can be applied to any individual or society, to any kind of suffering. It was particularly effective in the case of aid to African countries, because the continent was already strongly associated in Poland with the presence of Polish missionaries there, and their perception as aid agents. On a conceptual level, missionaries became the protagonists of Polish aid in Africa in the early 2000s. The focus on suffering become the central strategy in mobilising interest in foreign aid, and justifying it.

The Sacrifice of Congregations

The second type of sacrifice – that required from the congregation – also echoes heavily in Poland's emerging narratives about foreign aid. In the project proposal quoted above, this is visible in a desperate call for support from 'sensitive and reasonable people', that is, the project evaluators. This is achieved through the curated and provocative imaginary description of the reality on the ground. Not all organisations justified their funding applications in this way. In fact, it was mostly practised by young organisations. As the process of emerging as a donor progressed, so too would their language change. I describe this process of institutionalisation in the last chapter of this book, but it is important to note here how this highly emotive language resonant of Christian discourses would gradually be taken over by technical jargon (emphasising statistics, international documents, strategy papers and so on), which was seen as a sign of professionalism and was more effective in securing funding.

However, this evocative language did not disappear completely. Significantly, it would continue to be applied by religious organisations. In other cases it would simply shift and relocate to other settings. The PAH's practice is a good example here: while the organisation turned towards highly mechanical jargon in its funding applications in the early 2000s, in its public communications it retained the original messaging, focusing on suffering and the need to help. In the above-mentioned interview that Janina Ochojska gave to *Party* magazine, when the journalist noted that at the moment when South Sudan gained its independence it would also become the poorest country in the world, Janina responded:

> This day in South Sudan can be compared to the moment when God said: *Go in and take possession of the land.* When I was there for the first time, I saw what NOTHING meant. People live on what animals and the land will give them. They have primitive tools. In Bor, the second largest town, there are fewer than twenty brick buildings. The rest are made of iron sheet, or so called tukuls, which are built of mud. There is also a market where you can buy fruit, clothes and some basic household items from China. Most people live in primitive conditions, without access to education or health care. Even worse, without access to water. (Pawełek 2011)

Janka gave such interviews relatively often. Even though they were not always linked to a specific fundraising campaign, in the NGO they were seen as an opportunity to gain visibility, to communicate with people and influence their perception of the world, and secure

their support for PAH activities, for international aid. But these public communications also impact the way foreign aid is perceived; they shape the moral economy of aid by making suffering a central issue in public life. According to Fassin (2012: 251), such moral economies create ambiguous relations 'because the spectacle of the other's suffering evokes both horror and pleasure: one feels sadness when one sees the misfortune of others, but cannot detach oneself from this vision, because … we love to feel pity. This emotional duality of empathy remains a characteristic trait of humanitarian reason'. It is also, as Fassin points out, a characteristic trait of Christian theology.

Catholic teachings, which argue that missionary work – the work of those who assist distant strangers – requires sacrifices by home communities, are also reflected in the general discourses about Poland's transition from recipient to donor. These discourses do acknowledge the difficult economic situation in the country, but insist on the necessity to share the limited wealth with others. They frame international engagement in terms of a *moral obligation*. Just as a good Catholic has an obligation to sacrifice some resources for the benefit of missionary work, so too do Polish citizens have a moral obligation to sacrifice their common wealth in order to support the global fight against poverty.

From the early stages, young Catholics are not only taught about suffering in the world, but are also told about the ways in which this suffering might be addressed. The suggested solution promoted in schools, churches and Church organisations focuses on charitable giving. There is almost no consideration of any other form of engagement. Young Catholics participating in 'missionary clubs' and other activities (including mandatory events at school) are encouraged to donate some part of their pocket money, or money they receive from their families as first communion gifts, for example, to mission funds. These donations are talked about as their personal sacrifices and renunciations. Such charitable training and socialisation has a twofold meaning: on the one hand it is a way of defining 'a good Christian', a pedagogical effort to teach children that a good person has to be generous. On the other, it defines notions about what it means to assist others, especially distant strangers: from the vast possible repertoire of actions, the Polish Catholic Church specifically promotes charitable giving. In doing so, it shapes a society that sees donations (rather than political action or structural solutions) as the way to make a difference in the world, to address economic inequalities. This Catholic, missionary-oriented conceptualisation of

charitable giving, which defines it as a moral obligation requiring sacrifice, is exactly what we observe in attempts to mobilise public support for Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa.

The Sacrifice of Missionaries

Finally, the emerging moral economy of Polish aid to Africa is also strongly influenced by the third pillar of missionary dogma, that concerning the sacrifice of missionaries. This is reflected in specific ideas about aid workers, whose labour is conceptualised as moral labour, as a form of sacrifice. Tonkin (2009: 178) argues that it is exactly this specific characteristic that encourages people to support missionaries' endeavours. It is sympathy for hardworking people, dedicated to a good cause, rather than an expression of support for an evangelical pursuit, or concern with the suffering of distant strangers. Aid workers, and the narratives that portray them, very often mirror these same qualities. This motif, of an aid worker as a special type of person, ready to sacrifice, driven by a special vocation, has been discussed by many researchers (Mosse 2011; Fechter and Hindman 2012; Smirl 2015). Interestingly, in Poland, this view describing the aid profession in terms of mission and sacrifice was mostly applied to workers operating in Africa. It was rarely used in reference to those working in Eastern Europe and Central Asia – these were simply professionals.

In the process of establishing an aid industry in Africa, aid workers simply lacked role models to whom they could relate; there was no genealogy in which they could be rooted. In comparison, their colleagues operating in Belarus, Ukraine or Georgia did not identify as strongly with the aid scene, but instead with the specific trades they represented at home: they talked about themselves as educators, journalists, social entrepreneurs, public servants and so on, roles they also played in their activities at home. Most of those working in Eastern Europe and Central Asia were implementing projects that were somehow relevant to their professional experiences in Poland. For instance, Polish journalists were advising journalists in Georgia; Polish local administrators were advising on administrative reforms in Ukraine; Polish academics were implementing initiatives in Ukrainian universities, and so on. Consequently, they traced the genealogy of their foreign activities to the ongoing, historical *professional* exchanges between the regions. They were primarily professionals in their own fields, and the identification with foreign aid was secondary. The case of Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa was

different, however. Most people involved in that endeavour did not have professional experience outside of the aid industry, and had to build their professional identification around that trade. But unlike their counterparts in the West, they could not anchor their genealogy in colonial administration or the post-war development industry. They lacked a secular lineage in Africa. As development, scientific and academic experts of the socialist era were doomed as *personae non gratae* in the new post-socialist modernity, the aid workers of the post-EU accession era had to find a new way of contextualising their profession. For the historical reasons outlined above, the correlation of charity work and Church, and the approximation of Africa and missionaries, the most basic and familiar link was that with the missionary profession.

Consequently, the conceptualisation of aid work became very closely linked with the images of Christian missionaries, and the idea that it is a form of sacrifice. It was exactly these values that Wanda was evoking at Entebbe airport when she convinced us that we should not sleep in a hotel. As my fieldwork progressed, I realised that what happened that day was not an isolated event. The PAIN was a champion of the idea that aid work is a form of sacrifice, that it is first and foremost a form of moral labour. Not only in the organisation, but also through the media and various public engagements, Wanda, the NGO President argued that being an aid worker requires modesty and frugality. The salaries in her organisation were significantly lower than those in Western aid agencies. All non-project-related expenses had to be constantly negotiated. Each item had to be very carefully justified and needed special approval. Even such an essential purchase as a car was not an obvious expense, and for a long time Wanda was hesitant to grant the Sudanese mission this 'privilege'. A story was circulating among PAIN aid workers that Wanda refused to grant permission to buy beds for the aid workers at one of their mission sites, as supposedly this would elevate their standard of living far above that of the local people. The professional identity that she was promoting strongly echoed religious ideas about suffering and sacrifice. For her, being a good aid worker required the ability to make sacrifices. I never witnessed anyone argue with Wanda about these issues. People may have been critical, but usually post factum; the first instinct, especially among new staff, was usually that of silent acceptance (as was the case for me at the airport, when Wanda decided we would sleep on the floor). People, especially those working at the mission sites, were critical, and their criticism usually grew with the time they spent in the organisation, but their original

approval of the philosophy promoted by Wanda suggests that it was not her own special vision that she had to convince people of, but instead she was playing out moral codes that easily resonated with her followers. One possible explanation for the effectiveness of the aid discourses promoted by Wanda and in the PAIN is that the evocation of Catholic values that people had been socialised in since childhood made possible the emergence of aid activities in this specific shape and form.

The Family Metaphor

It is exactly these omnipresent, naturalised, but often very difficult-to-name references and interplays of religious beliefs and values that give power to the aid movement, that legitimise foreign aid in Poland. As I argued in the previous chapter, one of the main problems that aid activists face in their lobbying for greater Polish involvement in Africa is the missing link with the continent, rendering it from a non-place to a place of aid. Aid activists use different 'secular' strategies to achieve this goal: they foster fantasies about globalisation to promote notions of global interconnectivity and solidarity; they mobilise discourses of modernity by pointing to the West as an example of 'good donorship'; or they use the legal vehicle of human rights and various international treaties to trigger a sense of responsibility. But none of these discourses is actually successful by itself, or as successful as the rhetoric that plays on Catholic values.

Pointing to the contractual and legal obligations that Poland has as an EU, OECD or UN member (a discursive strategy copied from the Western [Protestant] parts of Europe) might seem a rational strategy, but in reality it is not a particularly effective choice in a Catholic country. As Henaff (2003) argues, such contractual and legal relations are favoured by Protestants, and are effective in mobilising philanthropic activities in countries where Protestantism constitutes a majority. But this specific rhetoric is not strong enough to mobilise the popular vote in a Catholic country. Within Catholic theology and ontology, all social relations are understood to be defined by charity, not legality (Henaff 2003: 318).

As Henaff argues, the prioritisation of generous and charitable relations in Catholic economics results in the prioritisation of obligations towards family. In order to become a subject of Catholic charity, one has to become a member of the family. According to Henaff, the purpose of charity is

proportional in as far as it takes into account the status of agents, such as the difference between husband and wife, parents and children, master and servant, lord and peasants, etc. In this particular theological conception this means that it fits well with the 'natural' order of things. This 'natural' order of things, which constantly dominates this outlook, means first of all that society is nothing but the association of families. (Henaff 2003: 320)

This might explain the effectiveness of the narratives promoting Polish engagement in Eastern Europe and emphasising a common history, Slavonic roots, thus playing out a sense of familiarity, of being kin. In the case of aid to Africa, this metaphor takes a different shape: it manifests in discourses formulating international assistance as an expression of global solidarity and global interconnectivity, in which all humanity constitutes a sort of global family, in which members can influence each other's lives and are responsible for each other.

This is exactly where supposedly 'secular' aid reveals its Christian connotations. Thus, these specifically Catholic understandings of charity and humanity are in fact also a core facet of the global education teaching explained in the previous chapter, and which is offered by the secular NGOs operating in Africa as a new moral pedagogy for the twenty-first century. According to 2011 PAH documentation:

> Global education makes us aware of the global interdependence that connects people, phenomena and locations. It explains the complexity of our reality, emphasising the causes and consequences of certain issues: poverty, conflicts, lack of access to education and water. Its goal is to shape attitudes, such as responsibility, respect, honesty, openness, tolerance, empathy and engagement in activities that support justice around the world. Thanks to global education, we know that each one of us can influence both our own environment and the whole world. Keeping that in mind, the PAH is educating Polish society to facilitate its continued commitment to a world with less suffering, more justice and dignity, and respect for human rights. (Polska Akcja Humanitarna 2012)

Such emphasis on global unity and interconnectedness sounds like a strongly secular notion, a new modern morality for a new global era. But as Robert Calderisi (2013) has demonstrated, such conceptualisations of international involvement are also central for the Catholic teaching that has been an essential force in mobilising Church aid activities and international involvement. This is particularly well illustrated in the last speech given by Julian Filochowski as director of the English and Welsh Catholic international development charity CAFOD, delivered on 11 July 2003 to the 25th Annual Conference of

the National Justice and Peace Network. In his speech, Filochowski, a British Catholic of Polish background, argued:

> In what follows I have drawn from dozens of analysts and theologians. On the one hand globalisation is about global interconnectedness with all the resonances of community and closeness and family. On the other it is about global economic liberalisation, with the harsher resonances of markets and profit. … Yet, if globalisation cannot be stopped, it can be controlled. It's not a given like the weather. It can be shaped and directed. It can be and must be regulated, but regulated towards what? Towards, I put to you, the global common good and the unity of the whole human family. Pope John Paul II would say towards the civilisation of love. Our secular world would say, towards human development for the whole planet – a world where human dignity is assured and economic and social rights are respected for every single one of us. … If we don't try to change globalisation, then we collude in its wicked consequences. We collude in the division and fragmentation of the global family. (Filochowski 2003)

Even though the PAIN or the PAH claim the secular nature of their work, and CAFOD is an explicitly Catholic organisation, their rhetoric is strikingly similar. All promote aid morality, which depends on the metaphor of the family. They all also follow the logic that resonates with the Catholic philosophy according to which all men and women are equal and are members of the same family, from which no one should be excluded, and the poor and suffering should receive particular attention (Calderisi 2013: 62).

As the CAFOD case shows, the orientation of aid practice around the family metaphor is not only a Polish issue. In fact, it is widespread across the aid industry at large. A quick review of the iconographic aid imaginary exploiting images of children, or adults who are portrayed in 'child-like' situations (in need of education or health care, vulnerable, needing the assistance of those who are more experienced, developed, 'mature'), demonstrates how deeply and strongly rooted this philosophy is in the industry (Benthall 2010; Malkki 2015). Similarly, images of women holding vulnerable children also constitute part of this logic, firstly referencing the highly symbolic Pietà imaginary, and secondly playing out and reinforcing the connection between notions of family, suffering and the need to help. Finally, this projection of the family relationship onto relations with members of a distant community – the subjects of aid – is most clearly visible in 'child sponsorship' schemes, which in Poland are talked about as 'heart adoptions' or 'distant adoptions' (cf. Bornstein 2001).

The application of the family metaphor in the foreign aid industry also manifests in other ways. I have already mentioned Julia, a young

woman who engaged in foreign aid through volunteering with the Salesians of Don Bosco. I also talked to a young priest coordinating the international voluntary programme in this organisation, and a few other volunteers working in the scheme. Most of them spoke about their engagement in missions in terms of 'parenting'. Volunteers would often talk about themselves as 'aunties' or 'uncles' for the children they taught, and asked the children to address them that way as well. The priest running the scheme further argued that involvement in missionary aid projects could be undertaken only by mature men and women, as only they have developed the parenting instincts which according to him are essential in this job.

While these are examples of aid activity with a specifically religious connotation, they are not exclusive to the initiatives organised by Catholic organisations. The family aspect of charity, together with the parental sentiments described above, penetrates more general discourses of aid in which unequal relations of educating parents/older siblings and children/younger siblings are translated into the ways in which donors, and especially the recipients of aid, are talked about. Many of the aid workers I met in Poland talked about the communities in which they worked as 'my village', and adults they worked with as 'my boys' or 'my girls', emphasising a supposed bond that went beyond the typical working relationship. This brings me back to yet another event that I witnessed while accompanying Wanda, the president of the PAIN, on her trip to Sudan. One day, as she was visiting a village in which the organisation had drilled a borehole, she took some time to talk to the women and children who had come to fetch water. Through a translator, one of the women asked her: 'Where are your children?' Wanda had no children, but without hesitation she responded: 'They are everywhere! They are in Ukraine, in Ghana, Sri Lanka, here'. The answer came as a surprise to the woman who had posed the question. 'What do you mean?' she asked Wanda. It was confusing to her that Wanda's children were in so many places, and that she had children in South Sudan so quickly, even though she only came a few days ago. 'My children are everywhere we work', the president answered.

The perception of aid work in terms of parental obligation is almost literal here. However, it was also visible in some less explicit circumstances. On that same day, when we came back to the PAIN compound, Wanda saw a housekeeper throwing rubbish over a fence. She went up to her and in a very firm tone tried to explain that she should not do this. The cleaner seemed surprised by the Polish woman reprimanding her in English, a language she did not

understand, for no reason. At that time there was no waste management system in town, and the only thing people could do with rubbish was to recycle it for their own purposes, burn it or toss it into the 'no-man's land' behind their fences. Still, in spite of the lack of ability to deal with waste, especially plastic bottles, which were scattered behind the fences of many compounds, Wanda insisted that the task of educating needed to be performed. When she finished talking to the housekeeper, she turned to the PAIN staff, and in a scolding tone instructed them: 'You have to teach them! You have to set an example and educate them! Otherwise how will they know that what they do is wrong? You have to tell them how to do it correctly, otherwise they will end up covered with trash and in an epidemic'. Her perception of 'the subjects of aid' – local people – as children who need education on even the most basic issues, as 'arable land' awaiting the 'cultivation' of progressive and modern ideas, is one of the key features of the current approach to international aid. The problem of paternalistic attitudes in Aid Land has been the subject of many academic discussions. The point I want to emphasise here is that these attitudes are not incidental, but deeply rooted in the Christian (in this case Polish-Catholic) moral economy.

According to Guimarães Sá (2004: 23), in the Catholic world the perception of poverty as linked to the idea of sacrifice results in the conceptualisation of charity as interconnected with the idea of penance. Charity becomes used

> for the normalisation of social behaviour. It is generally admitted that charity did not limit itself to easing the suffering of the needy, but that it was also a powerful means of ensuring social order. By repressing vagrancy, forcing the poor to work inside workhouses, and promoting good sexual behaviour, charity was used … to discipline and punish, to use Michel Foucault's (1995) expression. (Guimarães Sá 2004: 5)

Today, aid practices are discussed as a form of disciplining, with suggestions that 'giving food does not only mean giving a slice of bread, but also teaching how to sow seeds, or how to fish instead of giving a fish' (Grad 2008: 6). Indeed, the metaphor of the fish and the fishing rod is one of the most commonly used in the aid industry (Ferguson 2015).

Missionaries as Gatekeepers

The link between foreign aid and the Church is not limited to the ontological aspects. It also has a much more 'earthly' dimension.

The perception of missionaries as philanthropists and aid actors, and finally their association with Africa, translates into their prominent role in aid practices originating from Poland. In the very early stages of Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa, between 2005 and 2010, around 60 per cent of African projects financed by the MFA through the NGO grant scheme each year were implemented by Catholic associations or by a secular NGO whose 'local partner' was a Polish Catholic missionary working in Africa. Among applications submitted to the Ministry, including those unsuccessful in obtaining funding, the percentage of such projects was even higher. This pattern was replicated in the volunteering scheme carried out by the MFA. In the Small Grants procedure, in which embassies act as middlemen in obtaining aid grants for 'local communities', the number of Polish missionaries taking on the role of 'local partners' was even higher, often reaching 100 per cent. There are several reasons for such a high presence of missionary actors in aid initiatives.

Due to the generally weak presence of Polish actors in Africa, and limited confidence in operating in this region, missionaries were a first contact point on the ground, as we saw in the case of Wanda's visit to Juba. The popularity of this practice became especially clear to me after inspecting funding applications to the MFA, where applicants – secular NGOs – would often admit that their choice of project location was inspired by a meeting with a priest, or a visit to the Catholic mission. A similar process can be observed at the state level. When in the early 2000s, forced by the EU accession process, the Polish MFA was searching for possible venues for Polish involvement in Africa, Polish missionaries were among the first points of contact. At that time, Polish Divine World Missionaries needed large funds for the development of the St Luke Health Centre in Kifangondo, and as they enjoyed a good reputation among Polish diplomats, they were envisioned as an ideal beneficiary for Polish aid. Consequently, Angola became the first (and for a long time the only) African priority partner for Polish aid (cf. Knopek 2008; Czaplicka, Baginski, and Szczyciński 2009). In practical terms, enjoying the status of 'local partners' on the African continent, Church agents facilitated the emergence of Polish donors in distant territories.

Our Missionaries, Our Aid

I have demonstrated how the historical connection between the Church and charitable action in Poland impacted the emerging moral economy of foreign aid. I have also demonstrated how the association

of Africa with missionaries facilitated access to distant locations. But in the historical discussion at the start of this chapter I also noted the important link between charitable giving, the Catholic Church and nationalism. I will now show how this relation is also played out in Polish aid to Africa, how the strong (though often implicit) connection between Polish aid and the Catholic Church enhances public support for foreign aid, through the evocation of nationalistic sentiments.

In 2009 I had the chance to attend a session of the MFA Committee allocating grants for NGOs working in Africa. Before the meeting had officially started, one of the committee members assumed: 'So I guess we do not have to discuss the applications of *our* missionaries, we can all agree that they do good work there'. His suggestion was not accepted and all applications were discussed in the same way, but it was clear that in general missionaries enjoyed a good reputation among decision makers, being viewed as people with good recognition of local needs. Yet what was also important was the fact that these missionaries were 'ours', that is, Polish.

As I showed in the previous chapter, the politics of foreign aid at large is tightly linked with Polish history, and especially in relation to Poland's Eastern neighbours, with nationalism. This link has been extensively discussed by other scholars (Mawdsley 2012). But in the case of Polish work in Africa, this relation is not so straightforward. This does not mean it is not there, however. The fact that missionaries were associated with Africa, while representing Poland, allowed for the embodiment of national ambitions, even in a region that was perceived as the most irrelevant to national affairs. The distribution of aid through 'Polish missionaries' allowed a shortening of the distance between Poland and Africa, and realised the aim of the MFA, which as one of my informants put it, 'likes such projects where it is very strongly emphasised that it is Polish aid, that Polish people are there, on the ground'. When in September 2009 the Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Rwanda, the media wrote at length about his visit to Kibeho, where he opened a school for blind children, built from Polish aid funds and run by 'Polish missionaries'. In a similar way, the prime minister's recent visit to India attracted attention to the work of 'our missionaries' there:

> The Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, on Monday will start his visit to India from the southern town Bengaluru, which is known for its IT industry. A lot of Poles also work in Bengaluru. Yet the actual Polish flagship of this town is the work of Franciscan nuns from Laski, who in southern India take care of blind children. (mip 2010)

Even though the town in question is a highly developed metropolis, the focus of the article remained on the charitable efforts of Polish nuns. As Maciej Jeziorek, a photojournalist whose photo-story from the school for blind children in Bengaluru received several awards, suggested to me, it is not just the government that wants to promote the 'Polish link'. When searching for materials for his photojournalism, he himself admitted being predominantly interested in searching for the 'Polish story' as 'this is what the public wants to read'. Polish nuns working with blind children in Rwanda or India might be the best exemplary case here, as they bring an immediate association with the very well-known Polish centre for the blind in Laski, near Warsaw. This specific national rationale resulted in the conceptualisation of missionaries (instead of local people) as the aid recipients. Tonkin suggests that such a perception of missionaries as mediators in charitable giving frees mission supporters from the necessity to 'imagine the Others in the mission field, and allows them to concentrate on the familiar folk from their own congregations, enhancing the congregations' solidarity at the same time' (2009: 181). In the Polish case, this logic is extended beyond the limits of the congregation, where 'our missionary' becomes an indicator of 'Polishness'. In this way, familiarisation of missionaries and their inclusion in the aid circle allows Poles to overcome the difficulties in legitimising Polish aid to Africa. With time, as the process of emergence as a donor progresses, the same logic has been applied to aid workers: it is *our* organisations – Polish Assistance for Internationals in Need, the Polish Humanitarian Action, the Polish Centre for International Aid – to which people are giving, and *our* Polish leaders – Janka Ochojska – rather than distant strangers whom people want to support.

Conclusions

As I have shown in this chapter, the aid gaze and the moral economy of foreign aid does not emerge in a cultural vacuum. In Poland it is influenced by Catholic philanthropic practices; it internalises the Catholic perception of charity and poverty. As a result, the aid discourse, to a large extent, plays out a specifically Catholic ontology describing the world as imperfect, suffering as a 'natural' human condition, and nursing, compassion and charity as the best solutions to address these problems. According to Mitchell (2000: xviii), 'modernizing forces continuously re-appreciate elements that have been categorised as non-modern, such as religious elements, in

order to produce their own effectiveness'. The supposedly secular moral economy of Polish aid reflects exactly this mechanism. While Poland's post-EU emergence as a donor is a modernity project in itself, it is strongly based on the morality that is rooted in supposedly non-modern religious thinking about charitable giving. As I have tried to show in this chapter, in the process of emergence as a donor, the most significant concepts of the moral economy of aid are to some extent simply secularised theological concepts of the Polish variant of Catholicism. They are aid theology (Fassin 2012).

The current regime of neutrality in foreign aid and the dominant ideals of modernity, which operate through the dichotomies of private–public and religious–secular, enforce strategies that result in masking the existing interconnection of international aid and religion. In Poland, where the chase for the ideals of modernity is central to the country's emergence as a donor, this view results in the formation of anti-religious politics in the aid movement and presentation of it as de-religionised. Consequently, the practice of missionaries is being rendered non-religious, fashioning them simply as secular aid experts. Moreover, their religious agenda of evangelisation is pushed into the background, disappearing from public discussion. At the same time, secular organisations that use missionaries as gatekeepers to Africa, and cooperate with them in project locations, omit these partnerships from official communications, emphasising the 'pure' aid aspect of their work. Effectively, both sides carefully craft their image as 'non-religious', 'neutral' organisations, as the level of financial and social support for their endeavour depends on the success of their 'secular' and 'professional' rather than religious representation. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. This was also a reason why I was, at first, very defensive and reactionary towards any suggestions made by my colleagues at Cambridge that Polish aid may have had something to do with Polish Catholicism. I wanted to reject this interpretation as I feared that it was based solely on their stereotypical thinking about Poland. However, the further my research progressed and the more I distanced myself from Poland (through living and working abroad), the more I started to denaturalise certain issues and to accept the suggestions made by my colleagues as a possibility. In a typical anthropological fashion, only once I defamiliarised the familiar – by estranging myself from my own Catholic roots – was I able to see how

omnipresent they were in the aid industry and how important they were in Poland's emergence as a donor in Africa.

2. For instance *Misje Dzisiaj*, *Świat Misyjny*, *Światło Narodów*, *Posyłam Was*, *Misyjne Drogi*, *Posłaniec Ducha Świętego*, *Misjonarz*, *Horyzonty Misyjne*.

3. In the process of data anonymisation, to prevent identification of the organisation, some information from the original description has been altered slightly. This alteration does not impact the overall tone and message of the quote.

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5

The Mission

In the first chapter of this book I discussed Polish emergence as a donor in Eastern Europe. In the previous, fourth chapter, I talked about some first steps of Polish NGOs in Africa. How did the move from Eastern Europe to sub-Saharan Africa happen? In previous chapters I explained the mechanisms behind setting the general trajectories of Polish aid: going East or going South. But why did the PAIN get involved in South Sudan, and not in Angola? Why did it get involved in the Greater Upper Nile, and not in Bahr el Ghazal? Organisational documents, project proposals, public relations materials and so on create a coherent narrative of rational decision-making processes in which the organisation answers the most dramatic humanitarian crisis at a given time; its actions are based on thought-through strategies and policies. It seems like a rational, analysis-based process. Since Mosse's (2005) work, however, we know that this is not exactly how aid operates, and the PAIN is no exception here.

Even Mosse, who describes the origins of the 1992 agreement between the government of India and the government of the UK to start an Indo-British Rainfed Farming project (IBRFP), presents a story that has a clear logic to it. It has a clearly identifiable beginning and an end. While Mosse writes that things do not happen because of policies, he argues that they nevertheless happen for a reason. In the case of British aid, what mainly drives action is a need to maintain existing relationships. Indeed, British aid of 1992 was already a well-functioning machine; at that time Britain had been involved in India for decades. There were relationships to maintain there. Polish aid

of 1992 is a completely different story: it was the year when Janina Ochojska organised her very first humanitarian convoy to Yugoslavia (see Chapter 1). To my knowledge, there were no projects implemented in Africa at that time by any Polish organisation (with the exception of the work of Polish missionaries), hence no relationships to maintain. So, what drives countries like Poland, 'new donors', who have to create relationships? How are relationships conceived? How do you set foot in another country without knowing anyone there, without any connections, yet with a claim to change it?

When I asked at the PAIN headquarters in Warsaw why their organisation got involved in South Sudan, or the MFA administrators how the Polish state chose the priority partners in Africa, the official answer was about the needs: food insecurity, water access, conflict. All these, and many other typical 'buzzwords', were used to justify individual, organisational and state involvement in the area. These were all fair reasons: throughout the 2000s there was food insecurity in South Sudan, the country was still largely not demilitarised. But this still does not answer why South Sudan was prioritised over other countries with similar problems. How do we measure which poverty is more deserving of aid? Whose struggle is more deserving of support?

Finding an answer to these questions was not easy, and I do not think I succeeded. But perhaps my lack of understanding of this process, the constant lack of 'the whole story' and the logic behind it, is quite representative of an industry in which people are constantly on the move, where different stakeholders are often separated by many miles, and new policies and ideas are born every day. Within this world, certain projects are frequently simply outcomes of individual preferences, agendas, timings, opportunities; they are matters of access and resources, power struggles between individuals in organisations, and between institutions. This chapter is my attempt to find a method to this madness; it is my effort to understand the passionate and dedicated but often also ambitious and zealous, sometimes cynical aid workers, and their genuine effort to make a difference in the world. It is also a story of people who wanted to experience Africa, and for whom development happened to be a way to do so. In previous chapters I have focused on *the need to help* and aid morality. Here I continue this journey, yet I also shift towards another dimension: *the need to be there.* Consequently, in this chapter I ponder how the needs and ideas of the aid providers, as opposed to those of the aid recipients, can be an important factor in the growing development industry, and its specific geography.

Going *There*

Zofia, one of the three expatriates with whom I was working at the PAIN mission in South Sudan, explained to me the reasons why she joined the organisation and became an aid worker: 'I always wanted to go to Africa, but at some point during my studies I promised myself that I would never go there as a tourist'. She wanted something more than a tourist experience. She wanted the chance to live *there*, rather than gaze on the world through a rushed touristic journey. As she said, for her this mission was a kind of trial, to see whether she liked this sort of job. Regarding the choice of location, originally she was not ecstatic. During her African studies at Warsaw University she had developed a passion for Western Africa. She spoke fluent French and during her studies she learned Hausa. When I joined the mission in Bor, I suggested that I could bring some things from Poland if anyone needed anything. Her mother gave me a small package, containing, among other things, some old language course books so that Zofia could refresh her language skills with the Nigerian UN workers deployed in Bor. If she had been given a choice, Zofia would much rather have worked in Western Africa, but there were no jobs available to her in that region. When the opportunity to work with the PAIN in South Sudan came up, she decided to take it. Her dream to go to Africa, to see it with her own eyes, to experience it, prevailed over the particular regional preference. She never regretted her choice, and grew to love South Sudan.

In the pre-EU accession era, there were very few options available for Polish citizens to work in Africa. Poland had a negative economic exchange with Africa, so there were almost no commercial opportunities. In terms of the aid sector, many of my informants complained that the job market of the international NGOs was closed to them. Most of their job applications to Western NGOs or large international agencies either received no response or were declined. Some organisations provided feedback, saying they were only interested in hiring native English speakers or their own nationals. In the early stages of Poland's emergence as a donor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who besides the Catholic Church was the main, if not the only funder of Polish aid initiatives, was financing no more than ten projects in Africa each year. In fact, in 2000, the Polish state funded no projects in Africa; in 2006 it financially supported only six projects implemented by NGOs, and in 2007 nine. Many of these were run by Catholic missionaries, and they constituted the main (if not

the only) opportunities for Polish citizens to get jobs in the development sector in Africa. Opportunities were clearly very limited, and there were more people interested in these jobs than places available. Like Zofia, many of these people were primarily motivated by the wish to travel to Africa, and only secondarily by the wish to do development or humanitarian work. In a country where the median monthly salary in 2004 was between 700 and 800 euros (before tax), the idea of an extended holiday on the African continent was a rather unbeatable dream.

Effectively, the growing development industry in Poland worked as an enabler of fulfilling these hopes. As the Polish aid budget grew, as aid organisations developed and global education campaigns gained some visibility in the public sphere, becoming an aid worker suddenly appeared on the horizon of career and lifestyle possibilities. Soon, for those who dreamed of going to Africa, of working there, aid projects became an option to realise that passion. In 2008 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established its Polish Aid Volunteering Programme. Even though the ministerial staff emphasised the exclusion of clearly touristic applications, it was not expecting applicants to undertake major projects. The people involved in designing the programme were proud that it was opening up the world to Polish citizens – it was about opening the door to the Global South. It was global education taken to another level. Following the logic that the personal, bodily experience – a face-to-face encounter with the aid recipient – is what allows the notion of caring *about* to be transformed into caring *for* the distant sufferer, the MFA created a programme that would allow Polish citizens to experience the Global South, to get *there*. The people creating the programme were hoping for a multiplying effect. All Polish volunteers, upon their return to the country, were required to get involved in public outreach in Poland. Most of them did so through blogs, social media, photographic exhibitions in their home towns, school visits and so on. The idea behind these initiatives was to contribute to global education, to provide information about aid projects, to foster development awareness. In reality, however, most of these initiatives primarily became platforms strongly resembling travelogues. It seemed as if many young volunteers, experiencing exotic travels for the first time and now obliged to report on them, were hoping to be the next Kapuściński. The narratives they constructed often focused on describing the local environment, social life and politics. These pedagogical representations were presented as discoveries of hitherto unknown facts, as revelations of some unknown truths about distant locations, sanctioned by the sole

fact that their author had travelled thousands of miles and seen them with their own eyes. All these accounts suggest that participation in development was motivated as much by a fascination with distant places and a passion for travel as by the need to help.

This convergence of the development and tourist worlds has already been described by Simpson (2005), who studied the gap year industry. However, I am confident that this touristic perspective is not exclusive to young volunteers, but is also shared by development 'experts' (often no older than volunteers, but more fortunate in their job searches and then quickly self-proclaimed as experts). The opportunity to travel around the world, to live in distant locations, to experience the difference as defined by the development gaze and exemplified in development education campaigns were the reasons that brought many development workers into their profession. Regardless of whom aid professionals were contracted with – whether state agencies like the MFA or NGOs – they always awaited distant assignments with excitement, and upon return spent hours sharing their experiences with colleagues. This fascination with the otherness of distant countries and societies is the primary motivation for engaging in development, and it impacts heavily on the trajectories of their organisations, and the choice of societies they want to aid. The power of the development gaze, shaped by the processes described in the previous chapters, and which organised the world through the notions of otherness and difference, was crucial not only for mobilising support for development endeavours in Poland. It proved especially significant at the point of direct involvement in a particular development initiative in a distant location. It mobilised individuals' interest in joining cohorts of aid workers operating in distant locations.

In a study of the lifestyles and trajectories of development workers, Kaufmann (1997), examining individuals' motivations and paths of entry into the professional arena of development, suggested a link between the life histories of current developers and their choice of profession (cf. Eyben 2000: 12; Stirrat 2008). He pointed to examples of individuals who, being the children of former colonial administration staff, continued the cosmopolitan paths of their parents, but as developers. While it might be a valid observation among Western representatives of development, none of my informants had parents who worked on 'foreign contracts' in Africa or elsewhere, or who were part of the diplomatic corps. Some of my informants' families had never travelled outside of Poland, or did so only for infrequent Eastern European holidays. In fact, when I asked developers what

brought them into the field, many revealed that it was not their family or social background as described by Stirrat or Kaufmann, but rather the dream of breaking away from it. In this way, they were closer to Finnish aid workers as described by Malkki (2015): they were motivated by the search for something new, distant and other. They had a dream of great travels and adventures. Like Zofia, who worked for the PAIN, they dreamed of *experiencing* Africa.

Authenticity

Aid workers refer to themselves as expats. Polish developers use the English term as there is no suitable Polish translation. Most of the Polish words that describe Poles living abroad hold negative connotations related to economic migration or forced relocation. They suggest involuntary separation from home. In a country perceived as only on its way towards modernity, and on a constant path towards economic growth and political stability, migration is not perceived as something positive, but rather a last resort for those *forced* to look for a better life abroad. But expats are different; they hold agency over their own destiny, they are cosmopolitan. Unlike stereotypical migrants, they do not travel abroad for money, but for the excitement of a different, adventurous life. They choose peripheries over industrial and economic centres. The classically touristic period of separation from the ordinary, an experience of change, in the development world is prolonged into the long term. MacCannell (1976: 13) suggests that tourism is 'a ritual performed to the differentiations of society … it celebrates differentiation'. It is a ritual motivated by the search for authenticity in the Other.

It was part of our morning routine in the PAIN compound in Sudan to sit down under a tree and enjoy a cup of coffee, before the busy work began. On one such day, Marcel, the head of the mission, said to me: 'You know Ela, I wouldn't mind living like this my whole life; I do not need much in my life, I do not need a TV, city life, all those other things. I actually like our simple life here, without a shower and electricity, so close to nature'. Marcel, like many other expats I met, took pleasure in outdoor activities. When he was in Poland, he enjoyed hiking in the Bieszczady Mountains, the most remote mountain region in the country as well as the most rewarding in terms of beauty and tranquillity. His South Sudan experience, just like his other development posts, was integrated with his passion for an active way of life and his appreciation of nature. Marcel also had

another passion: driving a Land Cruiser. He enjoyed off-road trips, and sometimes would take the car on his own, 'just to ride ahead'. He said that driving with the music on cleared his head, especially during stressful times. He also enjoyed the thrill of 'Camel Trophy' adventures, of riding on the gravel roads or off-road, of having to pull the car out of the mud, and of orienteering in the bush. In fact, we all liked to ride with our elbows on the open windows, parodying Michael Jackson's 'Heal the World', which we alternated with the Bollywood hit 'Disco Dancer'. We often laughed that we were like 'the A-Team' in Africa, saving the world and having fun at the same time. It was not cynical; rather it was an inside joke referring to the moral purpose of our job and the lifestyle associated with it – a notion that we equally embraced and negated. It was a way of breaking up the serious character of the work, a sharp contrast with the official (often broken) rules imposed by the UNMIS on international NGOs operating in the area: mobility limitations, frequent requirements to travel with security and in convoys, strict curfews. At such moments it was clear that our presence in South Sudan, just like for other expats, was not only motivated by the urge to do development work, but also by the lifestyle, the excitement of experiencing something different from what we knew at home, something that many of my development colleagues described as authenticity.

Coffee under a tree in the Sudanese bush, Land Cruiser rides towards the setting sun by the Nile: it all sounds very glamorous, but in fact it was not. The coffee was served on a plastic table, and most of the time there was no gas or electricity so it was often made on an open fire; and the Land Cruiser was very old and constantly breaking down. The PAIN had very limited financial resources, and its compound did not resemble the quarters of other Western aid organisations. Aid workers slept in old tents, handed down to the organisation by other aid agencies. In each tent there was an iron bed and a basket for clothes. At the back of the compound there was a small latrine and a shower cubicle. Water was brought each day by car in plastic jerry cans from the pump station at the UNHCR base located a few miles away. The centre of compound life was a small hut, approximately eight square metres, which served as an office and dining area. The facilities seemed very modest, but as I was told by Kasia, who had worked in Bor for the longest, they were a strong improvement on the earliest stages of the mission: 'You should have seen this place before'. Apparently, what I was experiencing was luxury compared to the previous conditions. There was something of a patronising attitude in her statement. As she told me, just a

month before my arrival there was nothing apart from tents. There was no latrine, 'nothing'. There was no office; all office work used to be done in one small room of the Sudanese People Liberation Movement office in town, with whom the PAIN had an internet rental agreement. Expats would come back to the compound only in the late evenings, just before curfew. They would then sit around the fire and drink beer with the guards. As Marcel told me, 'In a way it was amazing, it gave you a sense of living close to nature, just like the Sudanese people. It was "real" life'. I was made to believe that I had missed the moment, that some exclusive experience of South Sudan had passed me by. Missing the opportunity to see the PAIN mission before its development, I felt inferior to my colleagues who had had a chance to live it. I did not feel that I belonged to the group. Yet I was soon presented with my own rite of passage, which offered me some hope for a better turn of events. At that time, expansion of the NGO mission was planned and the new sub-mission office was to be opened in Bieh. The idea was that I would be responsible for this new settlement. Anticipating this move, my colleagues said to me: 'Don't worry, when you move to Bieh you will have a chance to understand what we are talking about, what it means to build your own mission'.

The Ownership

This was almost the exact message I received from the desk officer, Robert, with whom I negotiated my access to the PAIN mission in Sudan. It was his idea to expand the PAIN mission, and he also suggested this task to me. Even though Robert was based in Warsaw, he was the main person responsible for PAIN operations in South Sudan. A few days before my departure for Sudan, we were having lunch together. Robert told me about the beginnings of the mission:

> I started this mission on my own, well with Natalia. It is very personal. It is about building something of your own, from scratch. But you will see … Once you get your own chance, once you open the mission in Bieh, you will have a chance to see what it is like to start something of your own, to make it your own.

Robert was not only a desk officer for the PAIN's Sudanese missions; he had personal investment in and attachment to the mission. He was the one who pushed the PAIN management to start a mission in South Sudan. Robert's position within the PAIN, which he gained through his earlier long-term involvement with the organisation

and its foreign missions, had earned him trust and respect from the organisational leaders in Warsaw. Before joining the PAIN, he spent almost two years in Africa, working and volunteering in Angola and Mozambique, and ever since he had been keen to go back. He had been following the situation in this region for quite some time. It was his interest in the Sudanese conflict that motivated his push for PAIN involvement in Africa, and it was his ability to convince the organisational management that the organisation should get involved there that was decisive for this move. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the improvement of the security situation in the area created the possibility to move into the region and begin operations. It was Robert who organised an assessment trip to South Sudan and decided to localise the mission in Bor. Without a doubt, he was sincerely interested in humanitarian work that would benefit South Sudan. The establishment of a permanent PAIN office there soon proved to be Robert's personal accomplishment, and it had special value in the organisation. It was the first PAIN mission in Africa and only the fourth foreign office of the NGO in its history. Being involved in its operations from day one, and being the only person who was continuously involved in it, planning its future and deciding its shape, he not only had substantial knowledge about it, but also a strong personal interest in how the mission was handled and how projects were implemented. It was *his* mission.

Robert was not the only one who had a strong personal attachment to the mission. Other members of the Bor post also regarded their work in similar terms. Each one of them expressed this feeling in a slightly different way, yet for all of them it was about making the mission 'their own'. The clearest sign of this attitude was in the ambitions of various staff members to leave some visible mark on the mission. While Robert was the main driving force behind the opening of the mission, as he noted himself, he was not alone in this job, and worked closely with Natalia. Once the mission was established and Robert left, Natalia became the head of the mission. She was the one behind the setting up of the new organisational compound in the suburbs. Before the PAIN moved to its new compound, it was located in the town centre. In 2007, local authorities designated a special NGO area outside of the town. They offered plots for free, and expected foreign aid agencies to move quickly. However, none of them were eager to move as they considered the area insecure, too remote, and the development of new facilities too expensive. In fact, for almost a year, only the PAIN followed the request of the authorities and relocated. The decision seemed rushed, as at the

time of the move there were no facilities, toilets or showers in place. Furthermore, at that time the area did not have a good reputation and was considered unsafe; it was beyond the city borders and fell under more severe curfew regulations. Finally, the close presence of Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers and incidents involving firearms in the neighbourhood did not encourage other organisations to move there, even though the plots were allocated to NGOs by the city authorities without charge. In spite of these difficulties, the then head of the mission, Natalia, decided to move. As I was informed, the decision was motivated on the one hand by money, and the prospect of a rent-free plot. On the other hand, it was suggested to me that Natalia, who at the time was nearing the end of her contract, treated this decision as a kind of legacy, a visible mark of her work in South Sudan.

When Natalia left, the next head of mission, Marcel, was eager to take the compound to the next level, to improve the living and working conditions and complete the construction of the first building, the hut. As he told me, he was glad his work in Sudan would have a visible effect. The establishment of the new mission, the development of the site, the building of the hut: all these expansions provided an opportunity for a quick and easy way to measure success. The developers' personal ambitions could be satisfied in such moments. It was these accomplishments, rather than project outcomes, that my colleagues liked to emphasise in casual conversations, noting them as their career highlights (Grubbs 2006: 290).

In this milieu, in this specific environment in which the development mission was conceptualised as a private endeavour, I was designated, together with another colleague, to start a completely new office in Bieh. When the idea was first introduced to me, I was very confused, and felt very out of my depth. I had no experience of working in development. I had joined the organisation to do research and did not feel comfortable being given such a big task. At the same time, I was flattered that I was trusted with such an ambitious endeavour, and as I slowly began to buy into the existing patterns of developmental behaviour, I became excited about the opportunity to build something of my own. The only thing that was not clear to me was why there was such a push for this new sub-mission in South Sudan, especially given that the existing office was constantly struggling with a lack of money and there were still many initiatives that could be implemented on the ground. So why did Robert push for this expansion? Why did he want us to work in Bieh specifically?

The Mission

I first heard of the idea of creating the mission in Bieh while still in Warsaw, and while still negotiating my access to the NGO. One day Robert casually mentioned to me: 'We want to open a new sub-office in Bieh, possibly that would be your job'. There was not much explanation of why it might be opened, the reasoning behind it or the long-term goals. It would be my job to learn what projects could be run there: 'You have to have your eyes open for new projects, new donors, the things that we can do in Bieh. I did not know much about that region, so Robert, who also happened to study ethnology at Warsaw University, explained to me: 'Oh you must know the place! Nuer live there, Evans-Pritchard did his fieldwork there. The needs are great there'. He continued his description, painting the place as an extremely remote area where 'people are suffering, there is nothing there'. He justified these opinions, evoking the assessment he had conducted just a few months earlier. By painting an image of suffering and triggering my compassion, by using the authority of 'being there', he made his claims sound unquestionable. Today, I image that this was exactly the same technique that he used to convince Wanda and others in the NGO that the organisation should move into South Sudan. I am still surprised by how easy it was, how little convincing was needed. This technique was highly effective. I still do not know the main reason for its effectiveness – Marcel's persuasive abilities, or my naivety.

When I arrived in South Sudan, I was keen to learn more about Bieh and the plan for the NGO's operations there. I soon realised that no one knew much about it. None of the aid workers had ever been there. There was no sign that local authorities had requested support; no reports were circulated about special needs in the region; there was no written record of Robert's assessment trip. Together with Zofia, who was to be my partner in the Bieh operations, we began to ask questions to find out what was expected from us and our work there. We also wanted to know what to expect there. I soon realised that our questions were taken as a sign of distress and hesitation: 'If you are afraid to go there, just tell me', our head of the mission said to me. 'It is not a mission for everybody.' To me, his suggestion to share our concerns did not sound like encouragement to talk things through, but a suggestion that perhaps we did not have what it takes to be good aid workers. Perhaps someone else should take our place. Paradoxically, the more we engaged in preparing for

the Bieh mission, the less professional we seemed to our supervisor. This specific situation, along with other similar experiences in my life at the mission (the airport story and the emphasis on frugal living described in the previous chapter), and other stories that I collected through my fieldwork (Drazkiewicz-Grodzicka 2017), suggest that at that time the PAIN strongly adhered to the conceptualisation of aid work in terms of a 'mission', a unique job with a special, ethical goal, a difficult, risky operation that can only be undertaken by selected individuals ready to make sacrifices. By asking questions, we were coming across as scared to explore unknown territory, to move to a new location that no one on the team had ever visited. Given the ideals promoted in the NGO, which emphasise readiness to take risks, to make sacrifices, we were raising concerns over whether we had what it takes to be aid workers. To our superiors, our questions were also indirectly challenging the whole humanitarian premise of the mission expansion: we were asking questions about the situation in the region, but by doing so, we were coming across as questioning the 'life in crisis' paradigm in general, as questioning the 'ethical goal' of the organisation, whose leaders were telling us that 'the needs are great in Bieh. This statement was usually followed by the information that there were almost no NGOs operating in the region, suggesting that PAIN expansion was necessary and urgent. How could we have doubts that in this post-conflict country in which insecurity was still a big part of daily life, in a region that lacked any basic infrastructure, there could be a shortage of development and humanitarian work? But we were not challenged on the facts (the bottom line was that neither we nor our superiors knew much about Bieh), but instead our attitude towards work, towards *aid* work, was questioned: were we committed to the humanitarian call? Were we committed to the PAIN mission? Were we ready to take a risk? Most of these questions were never asked directly, but were read between the lines in our conversations about Bieh. They were made clear by the changing decisions of the head of the mission and desk officer over which one of us should lead the NGO expansion: should it be Zofia, or me? The popular perception of aid work as a special ethical task, a difficult mission, was in this case institutionalised and internalised in order to manage us, the employees, and push us in the direction desired by management.

This strategy actually proved very effective. The Bieh operation at first seemed to me and Zofia completely random and underprepared. We had no idea why there was a push for a new mission, why it was in Bieh or when it would start. Nevertheless, instead of abandoning

the idea, we became very keen to go. We not only wanted to find out about the place that had started to grow on us, becoming a quasi-mythological, mysterious land of future operations, but most importantly we wanted to take up this unknown opportunity, full of potential, which this foreign land had become for us. We wanted to start something new, to create something of our own, on our own terms. The atmosphere surrounding the establishment of the new mission made us very critical of the PAIN at large, and the Bor mission in particular. We saw it as lacking professionalism, as an amateur endeavour: we criticised projects (even if we were strongly responsible for implementing them), organisational politics, the management, the way relationships with local staff were formed, and the ways in which the NGO positioned itself in local and international structures in Sudan. We criticised a lot. But we did not leave. Instead, we became fixated on the idea and maybe even obsessed with the possibility of starting our own mission, gaining independence, doing things on our own terms. We *believed* we could do it the *right way* in Bieh – the way *it should be done*.

In fact, we never actually moved to Bieh. Zofia resigned, while I was asked to leave. As Zofia told me many months later: 'Remember, we really hoped that we could start this mission in Bieh and do it the "right way", that we would do it better than all those before us, we were mad!' Indeed, at the time, the prospect of starting the new Bieh mission, our hyped belief that it was possible to do aid work on different terms than those propagated by the PAIN specifically and the industry at large, became our obsession. It was our response to the growing dissatisfaction with the aid industry, and an expression of our hope that aid could be done well. The new mission site was visualised as a mirage of potential, postponed success. To materialise, it required a fresh start and a new settlement.

Development history is full of fiascos rather than success stories (Moyo 2009). It is a very specific industry in which success is difficult to achieve and measure, yet the existence of aid agencies depends on their ability to demonstrate their positive impact. Reading tens of project reports, both as an academic and as an aid bureaucrat, I was always surprised to see that every single project was reported as a success. While statistically impossible, Polish aid seemed to generate only successful initiatives. Official websites and pamphlets produced by aid organisations, including the PAIN, are eager to list their achievements.

Stories of success populate NGO websites, but the realities that aid workers witness and shape are much more complex and rarely

so optimistic. While in Warsaw, Zofia was inspired by successful images of the PAIN operations in South Sudan. On the ground, she realised that the reality is far from the image crafted in Warsaw: she realised that the impact of many of the PAIN projects was not so impressive; some initiatives were not sustainable, and ended the moment the project expired. While in official documents the PAIN liked to present long-term statistics that allowed to visualise accomplishments in high numbers (hundreds of boreholes drilled, thousands of people helped), in a short term of the project duration these numbers were very different, especially in the first years of NGO operations in the country. For instance, in 2007 the PAIN had a project that aimed to drill only ten boreholes. At the same time, other organisations operating in the area were able to drill five to ten times more. This was not only due to bigger budgets, but also better recognition of needs, better logistics and work efficiency. Zofia was very much aware of the organisational shortcomings, and she was not satisfied with her own work. The establishment of another mission site in Bieh, and consequently the orientation towards new projects to be implemented there, provided novel possibilities for success. Participation in the new establishment gave her hope for a success story.

The Expansion

In a world of permanent failure, the settlement of a new mission could be an opportunity for a quick and easy way to measure success. This is one of the reasons why the establishment of the Bieh mission was pushed forward, why the PAIN office was moved to the the new location when there were no facilities available and the security situation was unstable, why the PAIN established its mission in South Sudan in the first place. From an individual perspective it was about legacy, as Marcel, talking of his pride in finishing the construction of the compound's first concrete building – our office – explained to me: 'I am glad I am leaving something behind, at least there is a visible sign of some achievement here'. The same logic can be applied to the more macro-level scale. Expansion is the central feature characterising the PAIN's self-congratulatory PR materials that were presented to the Polish public and international donors. Like a capitalist market, development needs constant expansion. The assumption is that if the organisation is growing, it must be doing something good. *Expansion*, the main driving force behind PAIN

operations, provided an opportunity for a quick and easy way to measure success: the growing numbers of drilled boreholes, growing staff numbers, growing budgets. Aid workers I met, PAIN staffers, were not detached from reality. They were the harshest critics of their aid work, but they were also very committed and devoted to the pursuit of making the world at least a slightly better place. Expansion, constantly starting things anew – new projects, new mission sites and so on – offered self-perpetuating though never fulfilled hopes of success (cf. Rist 1997).

This mechanism – the need for expansion and the need to make a personal mark – was also important for strengthening the organisational image, and more generally the myth of development. As Stirrat (2008) observes, in contemporary times when development is no longer based on visible advancements such as infrastructure building, development workers have difficulties accounting for their contribution to the betterment of the world. Additionally, constant criticism directed at their efforts (cf. Escobar 1991; Hobart 1993; Mosse 2005; Moyo 2009) creates a special need for justification of their work. While on the macro level development history is full of failure, the perennial orientation towards novel short-term projects and the establishment of yet another mission site provides new possibilities for success.

The life of the PAIN mission in South Sudan was a topical example of such a mechanism. The growth of the organisation, its ability to open local offices, was a sign of rising capacity and professionalism. In the earliest stages of the PAIN operations in South Sudan, when it was only emerging as an aid stakeholder there, PAIN staff would often express jealousy of other, Western organisations and their ability to settle regional offices. While most organisations operating at that time in South Sudan had central offices in Juba, where financial officers, logisticians and regional heads of missions were on duty to supervise the work of smaller offices in the field, the PAIN's only office was in the Greater Upper Nile region. This is yet another context in which the drive for expansion can be understood: the constant comparisons between emerging and established donors were a driving force for many activities. This is why, on the ten-year anniversary of its operations in the country, the NGO leaders were boasting in their PR materials about the 'prestigious' position that they gained in the region as the coordinator of water and sanitation activities of all international stakeholders in the state. The position in itself is not too significant, but the fact that this 'new', 'non-traditional' aid actor was selected to oversee the activities

of much more experienced and larger organisations was a sign of accomplishment and growing status.

However, expansion is per definition a dynamic process. It can never be completed, as this would mean stagnation. This has certainly been the case with the PAIN. Its emergence as a donor is never complete. The success of aid organisations is never based on the number of missions they have closed (i.e. where they have completed their humanitarian work), but on the number of missions they have managed to open. As it becomes more difficult to evaluate project results, and aid workers are losing the original enthusiasm surrounding international aid, it is the ability to expand, to open new posts, the growth in scale, that becomes a signal of work well done: growing capacity, rising skills and increased professionalism. If the PAIN, a small bottom-up organisation born out of the spontaneous need to support the needy around the world, was capable not only of surviving but also of growing and moving into new locations, it must be doing something good. In this context, the process of emerging as a donor is never complete; the expansion cannot stop. Two years after I left South Sudan and the PAIN, I bumped into Wanda, the PAIN president, at the 2010 Development Forum in Warsaw. With a sense of accomplishment, she told me about their plans to open an office in Kenya that would serve as a logistical hub for their staff. In a short conversation she also mentioned that they planned to start operations in Ethiopia. She did not say anything about the actual reasons for working there, or the needs they wanted to address. She did not talk about the projects they wanted to implement, or the goals they set for themselves. There were no specifics. Still, she was visibly excited and proud of the organisational plans. The narrative sounded very familiar to me, and very similar to the one I knew from the Bieh case: the assumption that 'the needs are great there' was implicit, and did not require particularities. Wanda did not explain the reasons to go there, but she did emphasise that it was her long-standing dream to do so. What was important was the growth of the organisation. In 1990, Ferguson and Escobar wrote about the anti-politics machine of development, and how aid organisations play with the interpretation of facts, creating new development discourses in order to legitimise aid interventions. In the mid 2000s, when Poland was emerging as a donor, we could see the effects of these practices in full swing. From a situation in which elaborate reports were produced in order to validate development intervention, through an era in which an obscure 'work in crisis' paradigm was enough to validate action, we arrived at a context in which the need for expansion became a goal in

itself, a way to justify aid work and to evaluate development practice. What used to be *a result* of development discourses (a need to go *there*) now became *a part* of the same discourses: the fact that aid organisations are existing and expanding is used as evidence of the existing needs. At the end of the day, it is assumed that they must be there for a reason. Rendering the development industry moral rather than a political machine makes the questioning of its existence almost impossible. Who would dare to stand in the way of organisations that are performing the ethical task of saving lives?

This is why in daily conversations, in daily encounters with other members of the sector or the general public, aid workers do not have to worry about providing lengthy and detailed information about the state of affairs in the region in which they work, or to which they plan to move. The fact that they are out there, their presence in a distant location, serves as proof in itself. What they need, however, to justify their practices is constant movement, constant conquest of new territories. The success of the NGO mission was measured in its capacity to expand: from an ad hoc humanitarian organiser to a large organisation with multiple offices across the world, and tens of employees. This process was eventually made visible on the walls of the headquarters offices, where maps of the world were tagged with mini flags representing operating locations. Similar maps were created individually by expats, who via social networks and blogs could make their trajectories visible. Like in the time of colonial explorations, when the establishment of stations and the creation of cartography were part of the colonial mission (Fabian 2000; Harley and Laxton 2001), today these notions resonate in the satisfaction with which developmentalists conquer the world and are able to settle in a particular area.

It was not only a matter of proving to external critics that development works. It was even more about proving it to oneself. As Grubbs (2006: 290) observed, personal ambitions play a significant role in development. The situation of emerging donors, where possibilities are endless, where the system is not stabilised and people have an unprecedented opportunity to create new initiatives and organisations from scratch, offers a great platform for those individuals who have strong leadership skills, for ambitious individuals with a vision. The drive for constant exploration of new possibilities, starting a new organisation, setting up a new mission, opening a new office, site development, starting a new project: all these were *personal* achievements. In official reports, on organisational websites and in PR materials, they were rendered as organisational accomplishments. In fact,

they were the results of the hard work of particular men and women who felt personally involved and connected with their initiatives. These were their organisations, missions, projects.

This was most clearly visible in the organisational hierarchies. In the case of the Southern Sudanese mission, the main reference point was always the desk officer. It was his opinions, rather than anyone else's in the organisation, that mattered the most for the staff in Sudan. He was consulted on all new project ideas. If more provisions were needed or if extra money for equipment was necessary, he was the first person in the Warsaw office to be consulted. Often, project coordinators operating in Sudan would bypass the head of the mission and negotiate their requests directly with the desk officer. On most occasions, it was also him, and not the head of the mission, who negotiated all mission-related issues with the organisational management. However, his position did not result directly from the arrangement of the official organisational structure. As the head of the mission reminded me at one point, the desk officer was not actually our direct superior. Marcel (the head of the mission) and Robert (the desk officer) were positioned equally in the organisational hierarchy charts. The actual superior of the head of the mission was Magdalena, the head of the mission division in the PAIN. Yet when members of the Sudanese mission tried to bypass the desk and contact Magdalena, or Wanda, the president of the organisation, they hardly ever received a response from them, and eventually the decision was left to the desk officer. The fact that staff both in South Sudan and Warsaw viewed the desk officer as holding special power in the decision-making process was not the result of policy (i.e. organisational structure) but was due to his 'ownership' of the mission.

The power of ownership, even if not defined in legal terms but through subjective categories, proved to be one of the strongest organisational authorities in the PAIN. The process of organisational ordering and of making this emerging aid stakeholder was a reflection of the rivalry over this very position (Law 1994; Latour 2005). The fragmentation of the organisation (the spatial separation of mission sites from organisational headquarters), as well as the development system as a whole (disconnection of donors, project implementors and aid beneficiaries), enabled the application of specific strategies that allowed various individuals to claim this status and create a niche that would allow them to live and work in a way they could accept, which was closest to their own identities and beliefs. Most importantly, it provided an opportunity to create something, to claim ownership of the project idea, mission, organisation and so on.

As the misunderstandings and conflicts over the establishment of the Bieh sub-mission in the East have shown, these processes were rarely smooth, and included power games and conflicts. Individuals' decisions to become aid workers were fuelled by the public face of development in their home country, which presented this endeavour as a mix of moral labour and high professionalism. This meant that newcomers to the job expected very high standards. Once on the ground, however, people realised that the effects of their aid projects were not immediate, or sometimes not visible at all, that their organisations were not running smoothly. This led to disappointment and frustration. Often, even if individuals were sympathetic and wished for change, the structure of their organisations constrained the possibilities for action (Hildyard et al. 2001: 59; cf. Hilhorst 2003). Old and new mission members would often come into conflict. As the case of emerging donors shows, this has nothing to do with the generational gap. In the PAIN, all aid workers were more or less the same age. These conflicts were about ownership of the mission, and about the ability to remain faithful to one's own vision of what aid and development work is about.

Ownership was a central fuel powering people to work in the PAIN, but also in most other Polish aid organisations. Notably, some of the most active development activists in Poland were men and women who after completing their first aid jobs with larger organisations, decided to start their own NGOs. This move allowed them to pursue their development calling and implement their own visions of helping distant others. The early stages of Poland's emergence as a donor, when there were very few organisations competing for funding, and when the MFA still allowed relatively unexperienced organisations to compete for its funding, facilitated the mushrooming of small, bottom-up organisations. Most of these units remained private enterprises, fulfilling visions of their owner-leaders. This was the main pattern for establishing aid NGOs in Poland and commencing the first African projects: in 2009, out of twenty-four organisations that applied for MFA funding for African projects, nine represented such small organisations. In 2011, out of eleven successful applicants, five represented very small, 'one-man' organisations. The remaining six included the Polish Humanitarian Action as well as large Catholic missionary organisations that were often used by various individuals as official applicants for projects that were clearly one-man initiatives. In the early stages of Poland's emergence as a donor, development cooperation was the endeavour of a few determined individuals, who used the growing aid apparatus

to push their visions of a fairer world, to contribute to the eradication of poverty, but also to experience exciting, out-of-the-ordinary lifestyles and travel.

Conclusions

The entanglement of the development mission with the lives of individuals, the inscription of one into the other, results in a situation where development becomes driven by the salutary efforts of the individuals who decide to take up this specific challenge. This becomes particularly visible in the case of emerging donors, when the aid institutions are only just being formed. While official aid narratives present these processes as institutional mechanisms, they are in fact driven by individuals who have a passion to push things forward. In this world, emergence as a donor, the starting of new projects, the establishment of new sites, rests on the performance of the small and fragmented group of expats who dedicate their lives to development and humanitarian aid. Fostering the ideas of commitment and a 'call' as central to this job allows for the start and perpetuation of this endeavour. Though supported by the group effort of home offices, donors, the public and so on, 'out there' at the mission post it is a personal enterprise depending on those few individuals who were not only ready but eager to take up the challenge, for whom foreign aid became their life, for whom the aid mission became *their* mission. This personal commitment is essential for the birth and continued existence of the developmental organisation and its mission.

As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, the moral economy of foreign aid fosters values that generate interest in doing good, assisting distant strangers, making the world a better place. It does so through emphasising the importance of the personal encounter with the distant stranger, the *experience* of connectivity. In this chapter, we see how this specific perspective impacts the actual development practice, which eventually becomes fuelled by the urge for encounters with 'the Otherness' (in terms of destination locations) and 'the Other' for the formation of the development industry (cf. Ollif 2001; Simpson 2004: 683). As shown above, the development pursuit has a dialectical power; it alters everyone and everything involved – including aid workers (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 5). Life at the development post becomes a mission, a grant expedition, an operation. It seems that even though everything has already been discovered, explorations still constitute an important part of

the African experience, and personal dreams of great discoveries are essential for the perpetuation of the development task, which constantly requires new subjects to be incorporated into this great international operation.

As Mosse (2005, 2006) observed, constant perpetuation of the development project cycles is one of the main characteristics of development regimes. He argued that the development apparatus is motivated by the constant need to maintain relationships. Yet the case of emerging donors shows that maintaining the status quo is not enough. Simply upholding the existing operation is insufficient. Development, as the emanation of modernity, just like colonial imperialism, must operate through expansion (cf. Dussel 2000, 2002; Escobar 2004). For these reasons, the development mission requires constant rediscoveries of 'new' locations to be identified as in need of development and transformed into new mission locations or project sites. The 'discovery' of these sites, and further expansion of the mission, becomes the goal in itself.

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6

Vocation, Profession or
Private Enterprise?

Up to this point, I have focused in this book, and in my account of
Poland's emergence as a donor, on the processes leading to the for-
mulation of moral foundations and political discourses about caring
about distant others. I have described how the establishment of
foreign aid requires the mobilisation of sentiments and fantasies about
the world of those who supposedly require international assistance –
the distant Other, who is not merely 'exotic' but also 'needy' – and
about those who will undertake the task of development pursuit – aid
workers: strong individuals ready to make sacrifices. These issues are
particularly important for the formulation of the development myth,
for the generation of faith in development intervention as a solution
to global issues. However, as I will show in this and the follow-
ing chapter, paradoxically, for all these elements to be stabilised and
naturalised, they must fade into the background. What comes to the
foreground are institutionalised 'technological' and 'objective' aid
systems. While the development myth is built on the highly personal
moral economies of aid, the solution to such defined problems is
conceptualised through the creation of the 'objective' aid system and
'rational' technologies of bureaucratic activism. The technocratisa-
tion, de-politicisation and rationalisation of the aid industry has been
well documented. Ferguson (1994), Escobar (1995), Mosse (2004)
and Mitchell (2002) have all pointed out how development presents
itself as an exemplary modern machine ruled by experts, not tainted
by any ideology. This research is of great value, as it deconstructs
some notions, but it does not really help us to understand *why* these

processes took place. Why did the stakeholders of the aid industry choose the path that instead of emphasising their ideological roots led to de-politicisation of their actions? In this chapter, I will try to tackle these issues. By continuing the story of the PAIN mission in South Sudan, I will try to demonstrate how 'missionary' and 'professional' approaches to development are two sides of the same coin, and how both are essential for the establishment of the aid industry. I will also show how the emphasis on one type of identification over the other is not incidental but relational, depending on various configurations of stakeholders, of their momentary connections and disconnections. In order to illustrate my point, I will use the story of one of the few conflicts that strongly influenced the life of the PAIN mission, its trajectory and the professional careers of the aid workers involved.

Cabin Fever: Living and Working at the Mission

This story takes place a few months after my arrival in South Sudan. I was woken by the sound of a trumpet. This morning signal is not meant for me, but for the Sudanese People's Liberation Army soldiers who had set up their base next to the PAIN compound. I would have liked to sleep longer, but the noise and the burning sun make it impossible to stay in the tent. I am definitely not a morning person, but the promise of being the first one up motivates me to get out of the tent. Those precious five minutes before everybody else gets up are an opportunity to embrace a rare moment of solitude. Most mornings I would move from my tent to the hut with a dream of a few minutes of privacy. This morning, it is all in vain. Kasia is already there, and so is our housekeeper, who is already working at the back of the hut. Within a few minutes the entire team is there, brushing their teeth, making coffee and following other mundane morning routines. While eating breakfast we discuss our plans and schedules for the day. Work topics entangle with conversations about the events of the previous evening: late-night adventures in the Ramchel and Liberty bars, the stories of the people we met, the gossip we heard. We are in the middle of these morning routines when we see through the wire window/wall a visitor approaching our hut. It is the representative of the South Sudan Rehabilitation Commission (SSRC), and he is here to see the head of the mission. I offer him coffee and take a minute to quickly run back to my tent and change from my pyjamas into more suitable clothes. I call Marcel, the head

of the mission, who is still in the shower. Wrapped in his towel, he rushes from the washing cabin, located at the opposite end of the compound. As always, embarrassed in such moments when he is put on the spot, he quickly hides in his tent to dress and shortly after he welcomes the guest in the hut. In the meantime, we clean up the breakfast mess and make space at the table for our laptops and other office supplies.

While the days differed in details, the centre of events was always the same. Everything started and ended in the hut. The hut was our axis mundi. This is where all departures took place: to meetings, to project sites, to Juba, to Poland, to the market, to the Liberty bar. This is where we all returned, after long or short journeys, at the end of the day. This is where we worked, cooked, ate and rested. Apart from the two trees at the sides of the compound, the hut was the only place to hide from the sun and the rain. In this small space, between two desks, four chairs, a safe, a bookcase and a fridge (which did not actually work), we would sit, talk and eat. Here we would admit official guests or entertain friends – often both at the same time. Here we would work on organisational documents, write projects or reports and do finances. Here we would read emails from family and work-related communications.

Both private and public were entangled at the mission site. On the one hand, we moved to South Sudan and settled in the PAIN compound because we were bound by our work contracts. Therefore, our life there was structured in terms of work obligations and organisational hierarchies, and was organised through policies and procedures. We had a proper organisational configuration and hierarchy: there was the head of the mission (Marcel) and project coordinators (Zofia, responsible for water and sanitation projects, and Kasia, in charge of the agricultural initiatives). I was the financial and administrative officer reporting to the head of the mission. We all reported to the desk officer for Sudan in the mission department (Robert), yet the official supervisor of the mission was the head of the mission division (Beata). Both Beata and Robert were based in the main office of the NGO in Warsaw.

On the other hand, this was merely what was written on paper. In fact, our relationships were a far cry from the conventional working environment. The PAIN compound was our home, where we all lived and shared the 'private' sides of our lives. We were not just working but also living together, and our relationships moved beyond the strictly 'public/professional' domain. We witnessed (intentionally or not, yet surely without invitation) some of the most important

moments of one another's lives (divorces, engagements, pregnancies, to name a few). Each one of us played a role in these dramas and was an audience member at the same time. Whether we wanted to or not, we became parts of one another's stories and lives; there was no escape, no place to hide. At the same time, we were linked by job relations and hierarchies. Yet there were no homes to go to after work, no doors to close. Everything was entangled, the boundaries were blurred. Or perhaps we were just misguided.

Life at the Mission: Where Does 'Private' End and 'Organisational' Begin?

The blurred boundaries of the personal and organisational and the entanglement of the two spheres was one of the strongest characteristics shaping the daily realities of work and life at the PAIN mission in South Sudan. All expatriate staff members originating from Europe, for security reasons, were obliged to reside at the mission site. The organisational compound was our home and office at the same time. Just as the space of this compound comprised working and living, private and organisational spaces, which blended into one another, our daily routines had no clear division of work and leisure, organisational (public) and individual (private) time or space. Yet even though the demarcation of private and public is not clear-cut, it does not mean that it is not important. Quite the contrary: it became one of the central features organising mission life. As we will see, it was not only the result of expatriates' individual wishes to retain some sort of independence, but it was also crucial from the organisational perspective.

At present, within mainstream development discourse, NGOs are conceptualised as carriers of ideas about development work, epitomising objectified, rational systems of action. This trend, commonly referred to by NGO activists as 'professionalisation', is additionally strengthened by the contemporary celebration of NGOs as the most appropriate (i.e. 'professional', 'expert', 'objective', 'transparent', 'auditable') technology of development (Stirrat and Henkel 1997). Even Marcus and Holmes (2005) argue that within cultures of expertise, the public and private spheres are strictly demarcated. Subscribing to the myth that expert culture produces about itself, they associate the experts' world predominantly with 'public' knowledge (statistics, policy papers, strategies), dismissing the importance of informal communication and private relationships in the life of international institutions.

Given this dominant view, organisations like the PAIN, which strive to be recognised as professional players in the international arena and as 'established donors', must subscribe to this vision suggesting that development is a domain of experts: it is a profession, a systematised engagement, which, far from being influenced by the 'emotional' and 'personal', is driven by 'rational' policies and arrangements of 'objectified' aid systems. Therefore, the decision to move away from the vocational approach to development, as seen in the previous chapter, and rendering it a professional task, becomes a way of establishing one's own position in the aid chain, and claiming recognition among the cohorts of development experts. Paradoxically then, even though in order to emerge as a donor the conceptualisation of development pursuit in terms of mission must take place as it mobilises the sense of urgency and motivates public support, it now has to fade into the background. What comes to the fore are institutionalised 'technological' and 'objective' aid systems.

Yet this process of 'professionalisation' is not an easy one. In a way, it reflects Alberoni's (1984) argument about the relationship between nascent state and formalised institutions. It manifests in friction between individuals who 'privilege the narratives of commitment and those who are more concerned with professional advancement' (Yarro 2008: 349). In this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between these two sides of the same engagement, between the 'angels of mercy' and 'development diplomats' (Tvedt 1998). We will see how these two perspectives of 'personal' and 'professional' are satisfied, played out and negotiated within the space of development organisations. As I will argue, the division between these categories is neither clear-cut nor fixed. The choice of different approaches to development tasks presents dynamic and relational strategies dependent on very specific contexts and relations between various actors. The manoeuvring between these categories reflects the more general question about the importance of the 'personal' in the 'collective' organisation.

The Wall: Public or Private?

The negotiation of these two spheres – private and public – and the role they played at the mission was one of the most crucial elements in the processes defining organisational life and the professional identities of development workers. It was not, however, a smooth

process. It was full of conflicts that were never fully resolved. As Latour (2005) observes, only through tracing connections between the controversies and placing them at the centre of the study can one fully understand social assemblages and their characteristics. It is in these dynamic moments that the performative definitions of organisations are revealed. In the case of the mission in South Sudan, the peak of the controversy over what it meant to work for the development organisation unfolded in an argument over the nature of the hut and the partition wall within it. As in the classic case of actor-network theory, the wall and the building became mediators that 'transform[ed], translate[d], destroy[ed], and modif[ied] the meaning of the elements they suppose[d] to carry' (Latour 2005: 39). As it turned out, this simple, tiny building proved to hold complex meanings for all those involved in the mission. It represented the embodiment of home (private) and an office/professional space (public) at the same time. As such, it became emblematic for the discussion of how one defined the work at the humanitarian mission, and the humanitarian organisation itself. The controversy, however, was never straightforward for any of the actors involved. It diverged in multiple directions that modified all the contradictory accounts attributed to its role. It was full of nuances, which as it turned out had radical effects (Latour 2005). Thus, in this case, the wall became a mediator that worked as a social aggregate for the organisation. The analysis of the wall's life therefore allows us to 'retrace the many different worlds [that] actors are elaborating for one another' in the process of organisation making (Latour 2005: 49).

The hut, which was so central to mission life, was built just a few days before my arrival in South Sudan. It was the only building in the whole compound, which comprised approximately three hundred square metres of land. In the whole plot there were only two trees left after the clearing of the bush, marking two sides of the compound, one that was thought of as the logistical space and the other as the work-living area. The first was where cars were parked, where the generator and oil drums was located, and where the pipes and other equipment for drilling boreholes were stored. It was also the area where the guards had their small shelter, just by the entry gate. The other part of the compound, partially detached from the logistical space with bamboo mats, was thought of as a 'living-working' space. There, in the corner closest to the entry gate, the small hut was built. It was considered the office and living space. Inside, a thin bamboo wall separated the main space from the kitchen, which was located at the back of the building.

The toilet and shower were located at the opposite end of the compound. To get there, one had to go through the 'corridor' of tents, which were set up in two rows facing each other. These five tents were modest, comprising only beds and some baskets for clothes. Under the beds and in the corners of the tents, organisational or project equipment was stored. Furthermore, by the entrance to the project coordinators' tents, other project-related items were kept: paints, water cans and plastic jerry cans. Originally, each tent was allocated to one person; however, as they were in a very poor condition with broken zips, unable to offer protection from heavy rain or insect invasions, we would often regroup. By the end of my stay in South Sudan, I was sharing my tent with Zofia. In fact, this woman, whom I first met during my work with PAIN, soon became one of my closest friends; it is difficult to decide whether we had to share a tent or whether we simply preferred to. In reality, due to the high temperatures, the tents were impossible to live in, so they functioned merely as sleeping spaces. It was in the hut that everything took place.

Just before the day I arrived at the mission site, accompanying the president of the PAIN who was visiting the site for the first time, the staff were still moving items in and arranging the hut's interior. It was important to finish it in time for the visit of the NGO founder, so that she could see the visible effect of the organisational work. At that time, the bamboo wall that divided the main area from the kitchen was almost blank, with only one or two maps of the South Sudan local area hanging on it. In time, however, the wall started to 'grow'. At first it was a good space to post important office items: cars' log books, attendance sheets, contact numbers, current notices and so on. Soon it became a space to display Christmas cards from other organisations, invitations to locally held events, and more or less important memorabilia of other kinds. Among these were a handmade card from Zofia's little brother, a plastic apple garland 'imported' from Juba, and three 'identification cards' featuring the Power Puff Girls cartoon characters – a gift from the UNMIS soldiers for the three of us 'PAIN girls'. There were also a couple of pictures of men and women cut out from gay and fashion magazines that were left behind by a French medical NGO which had decided to pull its staff from the area for security reasons.

Among the expatriates living at the mission there was no disagreement about the appearance of the wall; everyone contributed to its shape, adding various components on different occasions. Nor did the local staff express any negative comments; on the contrary, they would request their nicknames to be included on the contact lists, or

commented with interest on the muscular bodies of the men in the posters, often joking about who was who in this imaginary. They even added some posters themselves. These specific 'decorations', however, received less positive comments from representatives of other, Western NGOs active in the area, who would often roll their eyes on seeing our wall. For them, it was ultimate proof of our juvenile status. However, the arrival of Robert, the desk officer, who came from Warsaw to inspect the mission work, changed the perspective. He arrived with the newly appointed head of the mission who was supposed to take Marcel's place. A day after their arrival, Robert addressed the issue of the wall: 'All of this has to come down. This is not serious. What does it say about our NGO? This is an office and not your private home!' 'But actually, it is our home,' Zofia replied. I seconded her. The dispute lasted for about an hour. 'This is work and NGO space, you are representing the NGO. You are not here for your private reasons. You are here to work. This is work. It is not your private life! There is no private life at the mission: to think so is an illusion', the desk officer argued.

Zofia was struck speechless and I shared her feelings. I could see her struggling to bite her tongue and not walk out of the hut. But that was the biggest paradox of the situation: even if you left the hut, where would you go? Through all the months of our life at the mission, we strove to overcome the cabin fever from which we all suffered. Our strategy was to create and maintain some kind of 'normal' life there, and balance both personal and professional elements in our daily routines. On this day, however, we were confronted with a suggestion that our attempts to do so were 'an illusion'.

On taking up a job with the NGO, we had all known that our lives in South Sudan would differ from those we had in Poland. By signing the contract, we agreed to follow NGO procedures. These included specific regulations and policies (both documented and verbal, though often unspoken). They related to matters such as dress code, freedom of movement, personal relations, health matters, housing (Drazkiewicz-Grodzicka 2017). Yet despite all the written agreements, the actual consent to comply with the specific regulations needed to be negotiated anew each time, and was often contested and reinterpreted. This bargaining for the space for one's own agenda, individuality and private space on the one side, and work and organisational adherence on the other, was usually concerned with feelings of losing control over life trajectories and was experienced (by the people working at the mission) as a violation of the private and individual sphere. Consequently, it led to conflicts like the one

over the wall. But were we really arguing about the wall, or rather about our ideas concerning what it meant to be part of the organisation, where the NGO boundaries lay, and what it meant to be a development worker?

Development Mission = Life

In the course of the argument, two general visions were put forward that might suggest an answer to these questions. The first solution suggested that development work, understood as a special kind of work or a mission, required the merging of private and public, and submission of the first to the latter. *There is no private life at the mission! This is an illusion.* Robert put forward arguments to support his position regarding the space rearrangements in the hut. In accordance with this view, work in development was a special kind of profession in which, contrary to what Marcus and Holmes (2005) postulate, the division between private and public, personal and professional was not only blurred but was actually negated. In accordance with this vision, development work holds the characteristics of a vocation, an occupation that not only requires a special calling but also takes over one's whole life and demands extensive commitment and dedication (cf. Chapter 4). It is the mission of an individual with no strings attached, whose family obligations and personal relations are reduced to a minimum, who is ready to put his or her work first, and who is ready to make sacrifices (Bornstein 2005; Stirrat 2008). In accordance with this view, various aspects of life, in other circumstances defined as 'private', become a matter of 'public', that is, organisational interest. They become subjected to a range of contract regulations and surveillance techniques. As described in the previous chapter, NGO rules included regulations on issues related to private matters such as health and relationships. They were included in contracts and other organisational documents. However, expatriates were often highly critical of these regulations and adapted them for their own benefit. They tried to carve out some space for privacy, a domain that would not be subjected to organisational constraints and the unwanted eyes of work colleagues. For instance, they would form 'unwanted' (by the NGO leaders) relationships, and look for friendships and activities that were not work-related.

The arrival of the supervisors was a chilling reminder of the arrangements for work and life that were promoted in the NGO. Apart from the wall incident, there were many situations that

reflected this dynamic, including conflicts about expats driving NGO cars (a practice forbidden in the NGO) and arguments over how spare time was spent. Thus, following the arrival of the desk officer (or earlier the president of the PAIN), the previously carefully created 'private spaces' and signs of personal life were claimed as 'organisational'. Even though the space in question – a compound, a hut – was at the time considered by expats as their home, it became their home only because of their work contract. It was on the basis of this contract that the power of the employers in Warsaw was exercised. It was on the basis of this contract, and the understanding of development work as a vocation rather than just a professional career, that the organisational claims over personal lives and choices could be made. In this view, the private did matter, but it was claimed by the organisation. The success of the mission depended on the 'proper' execution of the private domains of life. The submission of the private domain to the work sphere was conceptualised as a necessity enabling the realisation of the mission calling.

Development Work = Profession

There is another way to address the question about what it meant to be a development worker, and what the 'nature' of development work and the organisation was. The second solution suggests a vision in which private and public are not only clearly demarcated, but the private is dismissed and overrun by the totalitarian view of 'professionalisation'. *This is work and NGO space, you are representing the NGO. You are not here for your private reasons.* Robert, the desk officer, made this argument in support of his position regarding the space rearrangements in the hut. This time, his line of argument was of a very different nature: development work was about professionalism, a job to be done, tasks to be accomplished, rather than a mission. Everything that was private had to disappear both from the wall and from our mission lives. The expectation was that the hut would be made into a professional office space, one that consisted of maps, folders, log-frames, flipcharts, planners, calendars and printed (not handwritten) lists of contacts with 'proper' names (not nicknames as had been the case previously). Everything else that did not fall into the category of 'official, work related' had to disappear.

Even though this viewpoint and the previously described form of conceptualising development work were based on two different ways of defining humanitarian involvement, these different meanings,

even if contradictory, complemented each other and together constituted an ongoing narrative about development (cf. Strathern 1991, 1996). While the aforementioned viewpoint was based on the idea of development forming a source of a nascent state, a social movement motivated by faith in development and organised around the ideas of mission, commitment and vocation, the second vision promoted a highly professionalised image. In this view, the concept of the 'mission' was associated with an amateur and naive approach to development. The ideas that were instead promoted were those of expertise, professionalism, objectivism and rationalism. This approach was especially on display not only in the request to banish any signs of the 'personal' from the hut, but in the request to substitute them with items such as work attendance sheets, car movement charts, log-frames, maps, organisational charts and so on. As Murray Li (2007) suggests, the status of expertise is represented in technical terms. This is why the implementation of these specific techniques of development and modernity was necessary to prove claims of expertise and achieve the required vision of development as a highly rational profession. Some of these techniques were in fact already implemented, but according to the desk officer they did not meet the required standards. Therefore, following his request, the charts were typed and printed instead of being handwritten. Instead of using people's first names or nicknames, official full names were used, and they were displayed on the wall in a specific order in symmetrical rows. All of these were visibility techniques. They represented an aesthetic attempt to order the heterogeneous space of the organisation (Riles 2000, 2006).

If the organisation was designed to promote development, progress and modernity, it had to represent those qualities itself. It therefore had to craft itself (through fashioning the space and the people associated with it) in a very particular way. This strategy might be better understood when we consider the actors and audiences towards which this strategy of representation was aimed. As Latour (2005) emphasises, all actions have audiences and as such are relational. Furthermore, they are dislocated and borrowed, disturbed, suggested, influenced, dominated and translated. Even if at times the desk officer was sympathetic towards other expatriates about the need for private space, his 'intervention' was made at the difficult time of introducing the new head of the mission to the rest of the team, and hence a time for 'setting the tone' of a new stage in the PAIN mission's work. Moreover, at that time the PAIN compound also became a base for other, Western organisations operating in the area,

who were in the process of moving from their old base in the town centre to the new compound, yet to be built in the PAIN neighbourhood. The negotiation regarding the wall, but more importantly the way we defined our identification as humanitarian workers, and the PAIN itself, was therefore made in regard to the new mission leader, but perhaps even more importantly through the Western expatriates representing the community of 'established donors'. For this reason, even though in other circumstances Robert may have sympathised with our need to protect some sort of privacy, he eventually took a position arguing for professionalisation.

'What if someone from UNICEF comes and sees the office like this? What does it say about us?' Robert argued. He was worried about the reputation the PAIN would gain among the staff of the UN agency, which he saw as a main donor in the NGO activities in South Sudan. For an organisation that was still associated with 'new donors', the need to prove its status as professional was among its priorities. The perception of Polish involvement in development through the lens of modernity, and the attempt to be included in the exclusive Western club, was also evident in the PAIN's behaviour. It therefore required subscription to the 'neutrality' regime (cf. Chapter 4) and promotion of 'professionalism' over 'mission' approaches. Indeed, as Mosse (2005) observes, the most successful projects and organisations were those that managed to maintain themselves as coherent, and driven by policy operational systems. Given the ambition of the PAIN, a 'new donor', to be recognised as a professional 'established donor', the pressure to meet these standards was not surprising. The professionalism envisioned as a recipe for success in the development world was defined through comparison to Western organisations. This pattern was also on display in the wall controversy. When making his point, Robert, the desk officer, pointed to other, Western NGOs as a source of inspiration on how a professional office should look. For instance, the idea of a car movement chart was picked up by him from a Western organisation that at that time was sharing a compound with the PAIN: 'We should have a chart like theirs'. Our argument that they had three cars, plus lorries and motorcycles and more staff and projects, while we had only two cars (one of which was usually broken anyway) to share among two people, and therefore we could easily locate them, was dismissed. The aim was to create the impression of expertise via visibility techniques. In accordance with the mechanisms of modernity regimes, the ideal and the modern needed to be replicated (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Albrow 1997; Ferguson 1999; Dussel 2000,

2002; Mitchell 2000, 2002). The idea behind these strategies was that their implementation would eventually lead to the systematisation of organisational activities, their regulation rendering them manageable (Quarles van Ufford 1993; Mosse 2003).

This fantasy of a coherent, controllable world of development through policies and other management techniques will be a subject of the next chapter. What is important to mention here is that for those who promoted the visions of development as a professional endeavour, this process allowed for moving beyond the definition of humanitarian engagement as a mission (which in Alberoni's [1984] terms could be associated with the nascent state), and 'progressing' towards institutionalisation – envisaged as another state in organisational development. Yet as we can see in the dispute about the wall, the two visions are actually not developed sequentially, but belong to one order and are complementary. Both sides of the wall controversy used the same arguments, depending on the position taken by the opponent. Both views were interconnected and not mutually exclusive, even if they seemed contradictory (cf. Strathern 1991). While they were presented as competing visions of development work, they were in fact complementary to each other, though remaining in friction, perpetuating the constant controversy over organisational and professional definitions.

Making Sense, Making It Work

This specific, 'messy' quality of the development work was one of the crucial characteristics of mission life. Expatriates who experienced it on a daily basis, even if they found it difficult, had their own ways of dealing with it, but they had no illusions that any form of 'order' with clear-cut boundaries separating private from public, personal from organisational, could be created. Yet it was at moments like that described above, when the daily routine was broken by some 'extraordinary' event, that attempts to 'restore order' were made. Even though Kasia, Marcel and Zofia were hired by the PAIN, and their presence in South Sudan was directly linked to their job, they often felt disconnected from the organisation. Their involvement with the NGO was contractual and related only to work at the mission. Never before (and never after) had they worked in the PAIN's Polish offices. Their job was to carry out particular aid projects in South Sudan. Effectively, it was the Sudanese mission with which they identified the most. Even though they were hired by the

PAIN, they often not only felt detached from it, but even disregarded it. The fragmentation of the organisation, as well as the development system as a whole, enabled the application of specific strategies to facilitate this process, and allowed people like Zofia to create a niche that would allow them to live and work in a way they could accept, which was closer to their own identities and beliefs. As Zofia said to me soon after the wall incident:

> You know Ela, you can justify your participation in this nonsense, this work with the PAIN, through your research. You can always tell yourself that you are here for research. And why am I here? How do I explain myself and my work for the PAIN? It's embarrassing. The only way for me to make some sense out of it, to retain some illusion of integrity, is that while I am here in Sudan, I can tell myself that I work for the PAIN, not for PPPS. The PAIN is here in Sudan, while there in Warsaw is some strange, other PPS which has nothing to do with me and what we do here.

Even though both acronyms stood for the same organisation (one was an English translation used abroad and the other was the name by which the NGO was known in Poland – Polska Pomoc dla Potrzebujących na Świecie), for Zofia it worked as a boundary that allowed her to claim her agency and ownership over her life and work.

The problem with retaining organisation unity and integration was well recognised in the Warsaw offices. It was clearly an aim of Robert's visit to take control over the mission, to remind the staff in Sudan of their accountability towards the Warsaw headquarters. His stand in regard to the wall was motivated and informed not by the actual realities of mission life in Sudan, but instead by the issues that were of the most concern to Warsaw. Among them was the urge to define the PAIN as an established donor, a respectable player in the international arena. This pressure to be recognised by Western players, the fear of 'what the Other will say' (where 'the Other' is not a local person but a prominent international donor), was one motivation to push for the professional agenda. What was at stake was not only the prestige that would come with membership of the exclusive club of Western/established donors, but also the promise of financial gratification. With recognition of the 'professional' status of the PAIN, its capacity to carry out large development projects would no longer be questioned, and the organisation would become eligible for generous grants from international donors. The emphasis on 'professional' and 'expert' knowledge production techniques allowed attention to be diverted away from everyday life, from backstage, from the messiness of mission life, to institutional politics, relationships

and the operational rules of practice (Mosse 2005). It offered an illusion of rationality.

Like many other, similar organisations, the PAIN was made 'to talk' (Latour 2005). The developmental and humanitarian work of the organisational members was an expression of their political interests. The NGO was created and sustained to bring about change. As we saw in previous chapters, in order to mobilise public support for organisational actions, the individual visions, dreams and political agendas of development activists had to be naturalised in the 'development gaze' and specific development discourses. This included the conceptualisation of development pursuit in terms of a moral calling and mission. Yet paradoxically, while they had great importance in the process of emerging as a donor, in the efforts to become recognised as an 'established' aid provider they became an obstacle and had to fade into the background. What comes to the fore are institutionalised 'technological' and 'objective' aid systems promoted by the established players as the ultimate modalities of effective aid. As a result of this specific arrangement, development activists, when defining their work and organisations, manoeuvre between satisfying their humanitarian vocation and at the same time fulfilling contemporary standards calling for the institutionalisation of social activism. This process was particularly reflected in the struggle to define the meanings and modes of development work: is it a mission, or a profession? Is it a personal matter, or a strictly professional and structured task?

While authors such as Alberoni (1984) like to contrast these two forms of social assemblages through the juxtaposition of entities like nascent state and institution, it is possible for these two ideals to coexist. Their convergence becomes one of the central characteristics of development organisations. Even though the ideal of development grows out of the dream of modernity, and is hence equipped with all its 'rational' technologies, it has not resisted the romantic seduction of association with a heroic mission, requiring spontaneous action and the sacrifice of the personal for the greatest goal of global prosperity. As we saw above, the manoeuvring between these two categories is strategic, and depends on the actors involved, their configurations, connections and disconnections.

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7

The System

Hope for a Better Future

This chapter will continue (though not close) the debate over the identity struggles of aid actors and the institutionalisation of their activities. It starts with the story of a failed development project implemented in South Sudan, whose lack of success, however, was not attributed to the problems on the ground, but to the systematic arrangements of Polish ODA and the way Polish aid is managed by the MFA in Poland. Consequently, the debate will move from consideration of the mission site in South Sudan back to the home setting of Poland. By looking at the complicated relationship between NGOs and the Ministry (the main stakeholder in Polish aid and the crucial donor for activities implemented by Polish NGOs), I further discuss the processes of institutionalisation of Polish aid.

In the previous chapter we observed how aid activists, within the boundaries of their own organisation, at the site of their development enterprises, manoeuvred between various definitions of what it meant to be a development worker, and the ways of conceptualising development itself. As I point out in this chapter, to address these questions in regard to Poland is equally important, as these issues conditioned the mobilisation of public support for foreign interventionism and the development movement at large. The choice of a 'professional' identity, rather than the 'missionary' angle, and formation of development as an expert culture also facilitated recognition as an 'established' and 'mature' donor among the Western partners with whom NGOs and state institutions have to cooperate in international forums.

Overall, this chapter provides an insight into the final step in the process of emerging as a donor, that is, the process of ultimate institutionalisation, through the establishment of an official, state-run apparatus facilitating its existence. Indeed, in the process of becoming a donor, the creation of an effective, perfect aid system was one of the key goals on the Polish aid activists' agenda. Just like the progressive institutionalisation and professionalisation of development actors described in the previous chapters, the formulation of the system was envisaged as proof of the mature, expert and modern status of Polish aid. As such, the creation of a policy-based system was an ultimate requirement (both symbolically and literally) for all those who wanted to be accepted into the exclusive Western club of established donors.

Formulation of an official aid system was one of the markers separating 'established' from 'emerging' donors, and as such was pressed by external stakeholders, such as the EU, OECD/DAC and the UN, but also by various international aid agencies, think-tanks and NGOs. In this chapter I will particularly examine the role these transnational networks play in national politics. I will showcase how the obsession with reforming – though not abolishing – the system of governance was an expression of activism (bureaucratic activism), of making changes that would ultimately lead to the eradication of poverty in the world.

Failure and Success: The Blame Game

It was the end of the year. Most people in the Greater Upper Nile area were getting ready to leave their work duties and travel to their homes, scattered across the state, or to neighbouring countries where their families were living after having left the country to escape the war. Everything was slowing down in preparation for the Christmas holiday and the January Comprehensive Peace Agreement celebrations. Local businesses and administration offices were shortening their working hours or closing down. Yet for the PAIN, it was the busiest time of year. The mounting responsibilities and extended working hours had nothing to do with the local context of Jonglei, however. Instead, it was the reality back in Poland, circumstances shaped some five thousand kilometres away in Warsaw, that proved to be detrimental for the implementation of development schemes and organisational life in the Bor area.

At the earliest stages of Poland's emergence as an EU donor, until 2011, the legal constraints of Polish fiscal law required that

all development projects had to be completed within one calendar year, by 31 December. At that time, Polish aid was financed through a special budgetary reserve, which was decided annually by parliament at the beginning of each year. According to Polish fiscal law, all initiatives funded through this mechanism had to be finalised by the end of December. All Polish aid funding managed by the Ministry of Foreign Aid, including development grants allocated to NGOs, was part of this scheme. In 2007, the PAIN had two projects in South Sudan funded through the scheme, yet both of them still required a lot of work. In fact, some of the objectives could not be met by the deadline. The financial resources from the Ministry were received only in late summer, but as the rainy season, which hampers any mobility and construction works around Bor, lasted until the end of October, some tasks were still in progress. The biggest problem was with the water security project. Its main objective was drilling boreholes in the region, yet by the end of the year not even half of the boreholes and pumps were finished. The second project, concerned with food security, was also not fully implemented. Even though the main activities of the project – the creation of experimental gardens and agriculture training for women – were completed, the kiosks that were envisaged as selling points for the vegetables cultivated in the gardens had not been constructed by the end of the year. Project coordinators were desperately looking for solutions.

One idea came from Warsaw. Robert, the desk officer, who coordinated the work of the Sudanese missions from the NGO's Warsaw office, suggested paying the contractors regardless of whether or not the jobs were finalised, and trust that they would deliver after the payment. 'How can we do that?' asked one of the project coordinators. 'How can I pay for works that are not done?' The desk officer explained that this was simply 'how things are done'. If the money was not spent by 31 December, it would have to be returned to the Ministry, and 'in the Ministry they do not like returns'. He also argued that following ministerial bureaucratic rules would mean that no work was ever accomplished. Indeed, he felt unease at 'bending the rules', but felt that it was a means to a greater end. Ultimately, it was all in the name of Sudanese development. He justified his decision by citing the problems in the organisation of Polish aid: 'It is not our fault that the Ministry gives us the grant so late in the year that by the time we receive the money it is too late to do anything. We must do this, otherwise no project would ever be completed, and we would never push any work forward'. His point was that the problem was with *the system*, with Polish ODA, rather than

anything else. His assessment that implementing the project within the existing legal frames was completely impossible was accurate. However, his solution to the problem seemed controversial to Zofia, the water and sanitation project coordinator.

Before joining the PAIN, Zofia worked for the government, not for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but for the Ministry of the Interior in a centre for asylum seekers. She was clearly dissatisfied with the suggested approach: 'If it is the fault of the system, and those in the Ministry do not know about the realities here, maybe we should inform them. Maybe we should write in the report what the situation looks like on the ground, and return the money. Once they have it on paper, in official documents, they will be able to do something. Without that everything just looks perfect, so there is no reason to change the system', she argued. Yet for Robert, who was in direct contact with the Ministry, things looked different. He argued that aid workers' job was to focus on the project and on making sure that the boreholes were drilled and that the vegetables in the gardens grew well. According to him, changes could not be achieved simply by reporting 'the truth'. Due to ministerial ossification and inefficiency, the changes required more time and more complicated lobbying techniques. Until then, we, the aid workers, needed to be 'creative'.

Even though the project team needed to manoeuvre very hard to achieve the project goals – and it did eventually achieve them – in official documentation the project seemed like smooth sailing. This narrative of success was also replicated in PAIN public outreach materials, in which the organisation spoke of its achievements with enthusiasm, presenting itself as a perfectly functioning body. When I moved from South Sudan to Warsaw and began to talk to other aid workers, I realised that this narrative of success was widespread. In most of the interviews I conducted, people boasted about their great aid initiatives, wonderful accomplishments, and the change they were able to make in the world. As I learned through my engagement with the MFA and later the Solidarity Fund, this enthusiastic image was also typical of most official project reports submitted to state donors.

This image stood in sharp contrast with my fresh memory of the difficulties with project implementation that I witnessed in South Sudan. It also contradicted information that I obtained from aid workers during informal conversations. These revealed a much less optimistic view, only confirming that the situation faced by the PAIN was typical of all those working in African countries. Clearly, the existing institutional arrangements for Polish ODA were making

their work impossible. People would admit to difficulties in turning the design of their projects into reality, and most of them associated these problems with 'the system': the way in which Polish ODA was organised; its focus on short-term practices; the limitation of projects to one calendar year; the late (mid-year) distribution of funds; poor legal solutions for enabling foreign assistance; and, finally, the limited funds that were available. These limitations, according to my informants, were at odds with the reality of the locations in which development work was carried out. Every year, this criticism was voiced in the annual NGO Aid Watch report (Drążkiewicz 2016). Its authors argued that the main obstacle to effective implementation of particular developmental projects, and generally to the achievement of developmental change, was the poor organisation of the Polish ODA system. Development cooperation was based on already existing collections of legal rules, scattered throughout many other legal ordinances. Most of these were designed to facilitate the flow of aid funds to Poland rather than their distribution abroad. According to the existing laws on public finances, it was practically impossible to directly fund NGOs that were not registered in Poland. All aid money therefore had to be channelled through Polish organisations. Only short-term funding was available (under one year), and there were no strategic, long-term planning documents regarding ODA. The system operated in an ad hoc manner. On the one hand, due to its very restrictive fiscal regulations, it constrained aid activities. On the other, due to lack of planning, it was seen as unstable and fluid, and therefore very flexible and open to interpretation.

One of the most vocal activists involved in the Aid Watch campaign was a legal activist, Ewa, who in 2006 initiated development cooperation with a community in Western Africa. Her project was funded by the MFA. The experience of implementing this project, or rather the frustration she felt (similar to Zofia's, described at the beginning of this chapter) with the way Polish ODA was organised, became a motor for her strong involvement in the Aid Watch campaign (Drążkiewicz 2016). She felt strongly that things must change. Once, during an informal conversation, she shared with me how upsetting the situation was. According to her, the whole system was 'crazy'. The terms of the funding were unrealistic; she felt that half of the year was spent in suspension doing nothing, and this period was then followed by the madness of rushed funding applications, waiting for decisions, and finally the inhuman efforts required to deliver results within the three months that were left for project implementation. The whole process was capped with the massive

headache in December when all activities needed to be wrapped up and reports written. 'No one can work like that!' she concluded.

While she felt that the organisation of ODA from the Warsaw office impacted the organisation of her own work, she felt even more strongly about the way Polish ODA arrangements impacted development projects abroad. Due to the specificities of Polish ODA, there was no real cooperation with local partners, no long-term planning, no possibility of making any actual change within such a short period. She hoped that by pointing out these shortcomings in official lobbying campaigns (such as Aid Watch), making them visible and creating 'public pressure', change of *the system* would finally be facilitated, and through that, positive global change would finally become attainable.

This specific logic, which attributes the failure of individual projects, and development at large, to the problems of policy design has already been discussed at length by Mosse (2004, 2005, 2006). He demonstrates how in the British development industry project failure is not failure to turn designs into reality, but a certain disarticulation between practices and their rationalising models. The Polish case, however, differs, as the main problem faced by aid workers was not the *gap* between policy and reality, but the *lack of* rationalising models (specific development-oriented acts, long-term planning, strategic papers on Polish aid, etc.) against which people could measure their work. From the outside, it seemed to me that this reality could be seen as a positive opportunity: everything is possible, nothing is fixed, the less bureaucracy the better. Most of the aid activists I met, however, both in the Ministry and in the NGOs, would strongly disagree. For them the reality was unbearable and chaotic. They shared a dream of an ordered and rational, predictable, transparent and objective Weberian-style bureaucracy. The fact that the existing framework for development cooperation was limiting possibilities for action (especially as regards time and funding) was only strengthening the perception of the (lack of a) system as ultimately a mess. Polish aid workers on all sides felt very strongly that they were being failed by the (lack of) wider networks of support and validation.

Exactly the same observation was made by Mosse in regard to the British aid system. He suggested that this condition is simply typical of the industry at large. Interestingly, in the late 2000s Polish aid workers expressed the conviction that the problem with the system of aid was unique to Poland. It was perceived as a frustrating *Polish* particularity, specific to the Polish system, rather than a general issue

faced by most donor countries. It was seen as a socio-cultural problem of Poland, a symptom of its never-ending 'transition'. The problems with ODA were interpreted as an 'Eastern' or 'post-socialist' condition, proving that Poland still did not belong to the Western club. The West was still elsewhere, and Poland still had to catch up. 'The problem' with Polish ODA was considered (by Polish aid activists, but also by their counterparts in the EU and OECD) a sign of the immaturity of Polish aid, its emergent status. The prevailing hope was that it was possible to fix this problem, that Poland simply had to learn how to create a sensible system of aid, and once this was done all problems would go away and development cooperation would become effective.

Consequently, the creation of a new, ideal system was envisaged as the final step on the path to becoming an 'established donor', finalising the transition. The struggle with the finalisation process of emerging as a donor will be the main topic of this chapter. As we will see, the creation of the perfect development cooperation system was seen not only as the ultimate stage in the process of naturalising Polish international assistance, but also as an expression of the hope of solving issues of global poverty and achieving the ultimate goal of development. While these concerns were also at the centre of the moral economies of aid described in the first chapters of this book, now, through the construction of the system envisaged as objective, technical and rational, they could be stabilised and presented as fulfilling the requirements of Western modernity. These conceptualisations resulted in efforts by aid activists to reform the ODA system and formulate new policies to inform positive practice. These processes are still ongoing. Since I began researching this topic in the mid 2000s, at the exact time that the Polish state started building its ODA structures, there have been countless changes to the arrangement of the official aid institutions: new departments have been established and closed, new policies and laws introduced, amendments added. The process of shaping, reshaping, reforming and changing ODA has been the only constant in Polish aid. Today, the system is not fixed, stabilised or naturalised. The only certainty is that its remodelling will continue. The examination of these processes therefore offers an unprecedented insight into the ways in which policy ideas are socially produced, and the ways in which (the vision of future) success is created.

As Mosse (2004: 646) observes, 'success in development depends upon the stabilisation of a particular interpretation, a policy model'. This chapter addresses exactly these issues: how success is defined

in the process of emerging as an aid stakeholder, and the bureaucratic methods of achieving it through the creation of specific aid institutions and laws. Firstly, I will examine the ways in which contemporary policy arrangements and the aid system are experienced and perceived by aid activists. Secondly, I will consider how these visions motivate policy changes and aid activists' efforts to (re)create Polish ODA. Thirdly, I will consider how the visions of change and new systematic arrangements promoted by aid activists are stabilised through the process of bureaucratic activism. Finally, I will consider how all of these processes can inform our understanding of the ways in which success and a positive future are envisioned in development. My aim is to consider why, given that there is such dissatisfaction with the ways in which policies and institutions work, there is still so much hope invested in the creation of new, supposedly better policies and the reform of administrative bodies. Despite the knowledge that good policy is not implementable (Mosse 2004), why is faith in it as a driving force of development nonetheless maintained? The question remains as to what this stubborn obsession with policy expresses. As I will argue, the power of policy lies in the seductive promise of an ordered and systematised world. While strongly bureaucratic in nature, policy becomes an aesthetic tool, expressive of aid activists' hopes and dreams for an organised and ordered reality, a fantasy of a harmonious system that will eventually orientate good practice, leading to positive global change and the eradication of poverty. As I will demonstrate, even though developmental policy is a bureaucratic technology in itself, its aim is not only to govern practice and people, but also to orchestrate visions of the future and the fantasies of success.

The Mess

The creation of an aid system is based on constant orientation towards the future, a hope that new forms of cooperation, new rules, new policies will provide a better framework for effective development assistance. However, this process takes as its point of departure the existing arrangements, the ways in which in a given moment people experience existing institutions. In the late 2000s, these were indeed precarious. At that time, the part of ODA spending that was at the MFA's disposal (so-called Polish aid) was part of the main state budget approved annually by parliament. As noted above, this dependence on the state budget for aid funds resulted in the requirement that all

resources be spent by the end of each calendar year. Furthermore, budget voting in parliament does not happen until the end of January, and only after the budget is approved by parliament and signed off by the president the Department for Development Cooperation in the MFA could start implementing its aid programmes according to the value of the resources promised to it. This took place from the beginning of February onwards. It was only then that the level of resources available for various aid sectors and regions could be officially assessed, and the final version of the annual programme for Polish aid could be published. Once this happened, and official documents were signed, the Ministry could announce the call for project proposals. When I began my fieldwork, this extensive procedure led to a situation in which the call for proposals was announced on 20 March 2007. In accordance with the Public Finances Act, applicants were given a month to apply. The results were announced in late May, and actual contracts and fund transfers were made soon after. Consequently, all institutions implementing MFA projects were given only six months to implement development projects.

I noted above how the absurdity of this situation was acknowledged by NGO staff members, and their anger towards the MFA. Yet despite the assumptions made by many NGO workers about the inability of MFA staff to sympathise, most of those I met in the Department for Development Cooperation were also desperate to change the situation. Their power to influence changes in the fund allocation system and release ODA from the rigours of the budgetary reserve was also limited, as they were frequently met with resistance from the Ministry of Finance. Just like NGOs the Ministry also had to become 'creative'. To facilitate NGO needs, they would announce the call for proposals before parliament even started the budget deliberations, often as early as October. The call would not include information about available funds, as their distribution could not begin before the official acceptance of the national budget. Yet this manoeuvre allowed the MFA to accelerate the funding mechanism and expand the project period by a few months.

The problem with ODA, however, did not only concern finances and timing. As one Polish aid manager told me, since international assistance is considered of low priority among politicians, they have no interest in negotiating the value of the reserve and its specification. This specification, however, has a significant impact on the shape of ODA. Like each budgetary line funded through the reserve, ODA needed to specify its spending aims in detail. For instance, in 2009, the reserve (no. 36) was titled: 'Implementation of the Polish

programme of cooperation towards development as well as support of international cooperation for democracy and civil society, including at least PLN 40 million (circa USD 13.461 million) for aid to Afghanistan and subsidies for the Specialised East European Studies Program at the University of Warsaw – PLN 2.3 million (USD 0.77 million), as well as Belsat TV – PLN 4,697,000 (USD 1,580,683)'. The difficulties with such definitions were explained well by Rafał Wiśniewski, a director general in the MFA at the time. During the session of the International Affairs Committee of the Polish parliament on 11 December 2008, he argued:

> We in the Ministry would support the idea that the title of the reserve should end at the formula 'as well as support of the international cooperation for democracy and civil society'. The extension of that title with the words: 'including at least 40 million for aid to Afghanistan and subsidies for Specialised East European Studies Programme at the University of Warsaw – amount PLN 2.3 million, as well as Belsat TV – PLN 4 697, 000' will strongly limit the options of the MFA, the institution in charge of those in fact limited resources. If it turns out that in Afghanistan we, as well as the Ministry of National Defence, are capable of reasonably spending not PLN 40 million but 37 million only, then we will not be able to spend the remaining 3 million on Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, or victims of an earthquake, which, knock on wood, will not happen anywhere, because the title of the reserve will oblige us to sustain the level of those 40 million [on Afghanistan].[1]

As Mr Wiśniewski explained, the strict definition of the reserve did not allow any flexibility in spending. It was not adequate for the nature of aid practice in which it was often hard to predict where aid would be needed and what it would cost. The changes were not made, however, and once the reserve was agreed by parliament it had to be executed in the exact manner in which it was defined.

Another issue that was detrimental for the Polish aid system at that time was its entanglement with national politics. Clearly, the terms in which parliamentarians defined the reserve reflected their political interests and their understanding of what Polish aid should be, that is, a tool tightly linked with Polish foreign policy interests (see Chapter 1 and 2). This is why they emphasised Afghanistan and prioritised activities in Eastern Europe. The latter reflected a specific understanding of foreign aid, which, for the MPs involved in the process, was predominantly linked to the ideas of 'democracy and civil society' building. This approach could be attributed to MPs' own experiences as recipients of foreign assistance, since many of them were dissidents in the 1980s who had benefited from foreign

support for their own opposition activities. As those movements focused, to a large extent, on free media, today, directly translating their own experiences from the past, many ex-dissidents argue that the media plays a particularly important role in bringing about social change (hence their strong support for Belsat TV). Similarly, many social movement leaders benefited, in the early 1990s, from foreign scholarships and study trips, so today they promote the same initiatives as a tool of empowerment for other activists across the world. Such straightforward copying of the 'Polish experience' was popular not only among politicians, but also among activists working in Ukraine, Belarus and other Eastern European countries (see Chapter 2). Many MFA staff members found them ineffective and unsuitable for the contemporary needs of recipient societies, but it was the politicians who decided the aims and specifications of Polish aid (at least in general terms), while the MFA, which managed the programme, had to execute the regulations as best they could.

These specific financial and structural arrangements, while from an outsider point of view might sound extremely tedious and unworthy of ethnographic attention, were in fact central to the life and work of Polish aid organisations operating abroad. While Polish development workers involved in Eastern Europe to a large extent benefited from the existing arrangements (specifically the emphasis on the Eastern trajectory of Polish aid and democratisation as the main focus), those developers involved in cooperation with African societies were in a position of disadvantage, as they received much less funding and were unable to deliver complex projects in a very short time. Regardless of geographical interest, all stakeholders complained that the existing arrangements were unsustainable, unpredictable, unstable and messy. There was no long-term planning, and legal regulations were so complicated and restrictive that they made project implementation particularly difficult. Stakeholders on all sides had to go to great lengths to educate themselves about the legal regulations under which Polish aid functioned. The description given above of the legal constraints shaping Polish ODA covers just a small sample of the various legal frameworks that aid workers had to comprehend and follow in order to conduct their work. There was no single document that defined these issues, but instead numerous acts and laws that were issued by different public institutions. As the system was only emerging, and ODA was new and constantly evolving, aid workers had to learn everything from scratch: there was no institutional memory, no senior experts who could advise on these issues. In fact, aid workers not only had to comprehend the Polish ODA system, but they also

had to learn about the international arrangements of development cooperation. Polish universities did not offer a degree in development studies. While at Western universities classes on development issues have been integrated into International Relations, Economics, Anthropology and Geography courses for decades, in Poland they were non-existent, both in teaching and in research. When in 2005 I discussed with various professors my wish to do a PhD on development, most of them thought I was talking about some sort of child development. Because of this lack of formal study options, Polish development specialists had to learn by themselves not only about sophisticated development theories, but also about basic institutional arrangements: who is who, who does what, where and how. This task was often overwhelming, and certainly required a lot of motivation, passion and stamina.

This process of learning was also in a way an attempt to gain control over the convoluted and complicated national and international development cooperation arrangements. Unsurprisingly, the earliest years of Poland's emergence as an EU donor witnessed mushrooming initiatives that aimed to educate aid professionals, but also politicians and the general public, about development cooperation. At that time, these initiatives focused predominantly not on the great questions about the future of the Global South, and the different strategies for eliminating global poverty, but on a basic introduction to the world of development cooperation. They explained the organisation of Polish ODA as well as other transnational mechanisms involved in the provision of aid. They took the form of workshops, seminars and conferences where various audiences could learn about the institutions of global governance. A few postgraduate development studies courses at higher education institutions were also established with the same intention. These pedagogical efforts all emphasised components explaining the structural arrangements of Polish ODA, and the wider global networks of international assistance. They went to great lengths to explain the different technical categories of ODA (such as bilateral aid, multilateral aid, tight aid, aid in kind, humanitarian aid versus development aid, etc.). The historical, political, cultural and even economic aspects of development were only secondary in these pedagogical efforts. Clearly, the development systems were perceived predominantly in structural terms. Moreover, *the system* of governance became conceptualised as the most important feature determining North–South cooperation and global development. It reflected a more general belief that there *is* a system governing development cooperation, that aid might be

manageable, and that it can be (or rather should be) driven by some rational order of easily traced connections and networks of governance. The ability to use development jargon and manoeuvre within various categories was a skill separating experts from laypersons. The inability to recognise various classes of development practice, and place them in their prescribed locations within the system, was a discrediting factor in debates. Aid activists, who only in the early 2000s began to actively build the Polish aid industry, by the late 2000s were already identifying themselves as experts, looking down on the newcomers to this trade who were attempting to come to grips with the complicated ODA institutions. With the zeal of neophytes, they policed the proper usage of development jargon, religiously following all the guidelines and regulations of OECD/DAC on ODA, even though they did not yet belong to this club. The point was that they really wanted to.

In their eyes, the main obstacle in this process was the messy system. Even though the system could occasionally be manipulated both by the MFA and the NGOs, it proved to have serious limitations and was causing problems for everyone. The system was experienced as complicated and messy, causing only problems. Things had to change.

Ordering

Central importance in this process of ordering the system was attributed to policy documents, such as the Long-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation, or the Country Strategy Papers, which were considered by aid activists as road maps for their actions, but which were missing from the ministerial repertoire or were severely outdated. Among these policy documents, the heaviest emphasis was placed on a particular legal document commonly referred to as 'Ustawa' – the Act on Development Assistance. From the beginning of my research, I heard calls for the passing of the act, which it was hoped would solve many of the structural problems of Polish ODA. The PAIN, like most other organisations involved in Africa, actively lobbied for the passing of the act. They ran projects and campaigns dedicated specifically to that goal. Most of them focused on publishing various reports or organising meetings and conferences where the future of Polish ODA could be discussed. Similar activities were organised by other NGOs. One campaign in particular stood out. In 2007, the Polish Humanitarian Action published a set of postcards

showing the most prominent politicians at the time, portrayed as the stereotypical 'poor' of a distant, exotic region: their clothes were ragged, their bellies bloated, their arms and legs more than skinny. Each of them was positioned against a different background, suggesting distant locations exposed to harsh environmental conditions, void of fertile nature or modern developments. Below each character, a personalised question was addressed to the politician: 'How would you feel in his skin?' The reverse of each postcard was addressed to the politician pictured on the front. There was also a message:

> Dear Sir,
> We are calling on you and the leaders of other parties to pass the act on Polish development aid. It is necessary so that Poland can fulfil its promise given to the poorest nations in the world.*
>
> Without the act it is difficult for Poland to provide effective aid resulting from Polish membership of the UN, OECD and EU, and in accordance with contemporary challenges and international standards. The inhabitants of the poorest nations of the world have been waiting for our act since the year 2003.**
>
> *Poland, like all new EU members, is committed to raising its development funds to the level of 0.17% GNI by 2010 and 0.33% GNI by 2015.
> **On 21 October 2003, Poland's government signed the Strategy of Polish Cooperation for Development, which envisioned the passing of a development assistance act.

This specific campaign triggered some controversy within the PAH and among aid activists from other organisations. Some found the politicians' caricatures problematic because they reproduced stereotypical images of poverty and the regions targeted by aid, rather than questioning them. The scepticism over the campaign's method was, however, weighed against general enthusiasm for the cause. The need to pass the act was the postulate repeated by all the aid activists I met. While they tried to push for it, their campaigns were not bringing about any change. The inclusion of the wider public in the campaign for the act brought hope that public pressure would motivate politicians to work on reforming the legal framework of Polish ODA. Through the distribution of these postcards, the initiators of the campaign aimed to target the wider public and generate their interest in foreign aid and the structural problems of Polish ODA. The postcards included a link to a website where a petition on the urgent need for the act was open for signature.

Intrigued by the campaign, I decided to find out more about the issue, and started to ask questions about the act. What did it include?

What changes would it bring to the existing solutions? What mechanisms would it introduce? But nobody knew. The act did not exist. There was no existing proposal on paper, not even a draft copy. Everybody wanted the act to be introduced, people were actively campaigning for it, but no one had any idea what precisely it would look like. The call for the act was a leitmotif of virtually all discussions I had on Polish aid, but in all of those conversations no one had any concrete suggestion about what the act should include. Even though Polish law allows for the possibility to introduce new legislative acts for parliamentary consideration via a 'public initiative' route – the only requirement is to obtain the support of 100,000 citizens with voting rights – none of the organisations had decided to take this step. To my knowledge, even though the representatives of virtually all NGOs were calling for the act, none of them went so far as to draft a proposal bill. When asked about their ideas on its content and the regulations it might make, the answers were usually vague. The most common recipe for successful change was the creation of a funding mechanism that would allow for multi-year programming and project financing, as well as the establishment of an agency. Aid professionals hoped that lifting ODA out of the Ministry and placing it in some unspecified new institution would lift foreign aid out of politics. The hope was that this would lead to the ultimate professionalisation and de-politicisation of the system. When asked about details, about particular solutions that could enable this change, aid workers had difficulties answering, but they knew one thing: in creating strong ODA structures, Poland must follow the Western example and the lead of the established donors. As the slogan on the postcards printed by the PAH noted, Poland had to create ODA institutions not because the Polish people wanted to do something about global poverty, but because it was an 'international standard', because this is what the West does.

Faith in the System

The creation of a new ODA system was so important that not only PAIN or PAH, but almost every organisation working in Africa, had special initiatives and people designated to deal with this issue. One of them was Anna, whom I knew from my undergraduate years at Warsaw University where we studied at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. Now, through our engagement with the PAH, we had a chance to reconnect. Anna was highly energetic and

her passion for political activism and aid issues was highly contagious. We spent hours discussing her work, and my research.

One of the projects Anna was coordinating was a semi-educational, semi-lobbying initiative entitled 'Knowledge Makes Change!' The project targeted wider audiences (mostly teenagers and students), but also had a large component dedicated to politicians and decision makers. The implementation of this part of the project was one of Anna's main responsibilities. As the title of the project suggests, the logic behind the initiative was the idea that the more people know about foreign aid issues, the more they will be willing to support foreign aid, and eventually global change will be achieved. But as Anna told me repeatedly, in Poland this educational effort meant serious *organic work*, teaching of the basics. Her perception was that most politicians in Poland had no idea about the world outside of Poland, outside of the Eastern European region, and development aid was simply an empty term for them. Her goal was to fill the term with some form of meaning, and provide the knowledge necessary for support of the international aid agenda.

One way of doing this was through inviting MPs on study trips to African countries, where they could see how aid projects work in practice and 'experience' development locations first-hand. However, MPs did not travel to see the projects implemented by the PAH. Instead, they travelled to see projects carried out by Western NGOs. According to Anna, these trips had special value in gaining political support for Poland's emergence as a donor:

> I can see that those study trips work. It shows more or less how aid works, it motivates, it shows that there is a need for action. … In Poland, three-quarters of MPs working in the Commission for Foreign Affairs, who theoretically should understand global issues, [have no idea] about it. In general, all the obligations that we took on in the international arena, or in the EU, all of that has no meaning for these people. … [So this trip] aims at personal involvement, it motivates them because they see the necessity that all nations, all people, should do something about these [poverty] issues, but we in Poland do nothing. From the politicians' perspective, it is about noticing that other countries do something, the EU commission does something, that there is even such a thing as the African Union, which also does something and cooperates with the EU. That we have Millennium Development Goals.

For Anna, the study trip was, on the one hand, a way of mobilising political interest. On the other, it was an important pedagogical technique in providing knowledge about the way the aid system operates. I have already discussed the sensualisation of aid knowledge,

and the need for creating 'development experiences' in Chapter 3. Here, I want to focus on the constant orientation towards the West in the pedagogical efforts and informational campaigns undertaken by Polish aid activists. The goal of the initiative was not simply to demonstrate that there are problems in the Global South, and that there are organisations in Poland that try to address them. This was not enough, and was seen as ineffective practice. Instead, what mattered was to play on popular pro-Western aspirations. The narrative that Anna was actively shaping through this initiative once again suggested that Poland had to become a donor because this was the 'Western standard', and if Poland wanted to be taken seriously in the international arena, it had to follow the lead of its European partners. Secondly, the way to mature as a donor, and to professionalise Polish aid, was through ordering the system and creating ODA structures that resembled the solutions practised by established donors.

The view of 'the West' as a model to emulate in the formation of Polish aid was signalled in previous chapters, where I discussed the special evocation of the EU in shaping Polish discourses on aid and development. As I argued there, the EU holds a significant symbolic meaning, representing the qualities of the mythological West and its modernity. It was, therefore, not surprising that in discussions relating to the reorganisation of ODA, aid activists looked up not only to Brussels but also to various other countries representing the 'ideal' 'Western' model. This specific narrative, which skilfully played on the wishes of many Polish citizens to be recognised as part of the West, and shamed them for not doing what the rest of the 'civilised' world was doing, was clearly most effective among the Euro-enthusiasts, who in the 2000s still formed the parliamentary majority. The supporters of Polish aid validated their call to change ODA arrangements through the evocation of the authority of the EU and OECD/DAC, constantly pointing towards Western countries – established donors – as the paramount example of how aid should be done.

Consequently, the early years of Poland's emergence as a donor were marked by mushrooming publications, conferences, seminars and workshops discussing various systems of aid governance and offering recommendations for reforming Polish ODA. These initiatives predominantly focused on the way aid is done by established donors, implicitly or explicitly suggesting that this was the direction Poland should take.[2] One such event was the 'Foreign Assistance – Experiences, Challenges, Trends' conference held in October 2008

in the Polish parliament. The timing of the event seemed random; at that time, no drafts of the aid act were being discussed in parliament. Neither the MFA nor the Ministry of Finance had advanced work on the proposals. Yet the *anticipation* and *hope* that, in some unspecified future, work on the act would eventually come to fruition in parliament was enough to inspire the event. The idea behind the conference was to provide Polish parliamentarians with information on how other countries organise their national ODA. In several sessions, MPs (who came in very low numbers, and none of whom stayed at the conference for the whole day) could attend presentations given by representatives of various Western bodies managing foreign aid.[3] Most of the event was dedicated to discussing the 'good practices' of 'established donors'. Only one presentation was dedicated to the discussion of a non-Western perspective, that of the Czech Republic's Department for Democracy and Human Rights affiliated with the Czech MFA. This logic, in which 'established donors' provide knowledge and expertise to their 'emerging partners', was visible in most other similar lobbying campaigns.

Transnational Activism

The discursive politics (the division between the established and emerging donors) and the accumulation of events and initiatives in which Western experts were allocated senior positions confirms the hierarchical power arrangements within the global chain of giving and receiving (as suggested in Chapter 1). It also implies the importance of transnationalism and globalisation in the aid industry and the EU. Emerging donors had an unprecedented opportunity to undertake international assistance on their own terms, to create their own alternative to the Western system of international cooperation. In fact, many Polish activists and politicians made this claim, suggesting that Poland had a comparative advantage over the West. The fact that the country was not complicit in the colonisation of Africa in the way that its Western partners were, and has itself been on the receiving end of foreign aid, supposedly predestined Poland to create more equal relationships with foreign partners. As I have argued elsewhere, this claim was difficult to uphold when tested in reality (Drazkiewicz-Grodzicka 2017). However, Poland still had a chance to create new qualities in the foreign aid industry, and to offer new contributions to the existing patterns in the EU. In fact, in the early stages of Poland's emergence as an EU donor, the country had the

power and ability to counter the dominant discourses of the EU. It had done this skilfully by promoting the Eastern trajectory of Polish aid, and by promoting democratisation as one of the most important objectives of international assistance (Petrova 2014; Pospieszna 2014). In fact, in 2014, Poland managed to introduce a new mechanism in the EU, the European Endowment for Democracy, dedicated specifically to the support of democracy. But as the process of emerging as a donor progressed, and as Poland aimed to join the DAC, its ability to resist the dominant discourses weakened, and major changes in the ODA system became visible.

Unlike most EU critics, who focus on the homogenising power of Brussels, I do not want to argue here that the reason for Poland's inability to perform its own version of foreign aid was because of specific decisions made by Brussels. In fact, to my knowledge, neither the EU nor the DAC have at any point given specific recommendations on what Poland should do in terms of foreign aid and how it should do it, what legal and institutional format it should take. Indeed, through formal and informal channels, DAC members sent recommendations that ODA institutions needed to be strengthened, that legal changes must be introduced to enhance aid effectiveness, but these were very generic and general suggestions. It was up to Poland how to work these things out. Still, for those who were interested in orienteering Polish aid from the East of Poland to Africa, and creating a stronger ODA apparatus, the dominant Western institutions proved essential in generating change in Polish ODA structures. It was predominantly the symbolic (rather than political) power of the West–East division that proved to be the driving force behind the reforms of Polish ODA. It was the internal as well as the external perception of Poland as 'the Other' in Europe, not equal to its Western counterparts, that motivated the need to follow the path of Western donors. The status of Western actors as holding significantly higher positions in the symbolic hierarchies of power was hardly ever questioned by Polish aid actors. As much as they were frustrated by the category, they often contributed to its reproduction (cf. Wedel 1998).

This relationship had a lot to do with the politics of identity shaped by the condition of modernity (see Introduction and Chapter 1), but it also reflected some more particular divisions within the Polish aid industry. The strongest supporters of restructuring Polish ODA were organisations operating in Africa. They identified themselves as the vanguard of the aid movement in Poland, and aimed to challenge existing ideas about Polish foreign assistance. But compared

to activists interested in the Eastern trajectory of Polish aid, they were clearly a minority. Those interested in democratisation and the Eastern trajectory of Polish aid anchored their work in values that fitted well with the mainstream narratives on Poland and Polish society, defining it as a champion of democratic and independent struggle, a regional leader, a promoter of Western values and a counterbalance to Russia. But the supporters of the African trajectory, despite their best efforts, struggled to fit their narratives on the need for the global fight against poverty into existing national discourses. The religious connotations, mentioned in Chapter 4, assisted in generating compassion for the needy, but at the same time worked against the aid workers, painting them as zealous missionaries rather than professionals.

Moreover, they put forward an agenda that was new, intending to reshape the thinking about Poland's position in the world. This was not an easy task, and they were, at least at the earliest stages, failing. Hence, for the progression of their agenda, the transnational networks – the EU, the UN, the OECD, the typical powerful and dominant stakeholders – paradoxically became an important source of support and empowerment. They strengthened their agenda and leveraged them from the position of trivial opposition. Anchoring themselves in the EU and the UN agenda allowed Polish stakeholders to be lifted from a position of utopian missionaries to the level of a strong international cohort of experts (Elyachar 2005). Foreign organisations and international institutions of established status offered visibility and power to Polish aid workers interested in aiding Africa and transforming Polish ODA (Alvarez 1998).

For them, foreign law such as that of the EU, which as Merry (1992: 366) has suggested is considered remote and alien, was in fact often more familiar and desirable than national or local laws. This is why Polish activists so often called upon various international agreements (the Cotonou Agreement, the Monterrey Consensus, the Millennium Development Goals, etc.) and pointed towards Western systems of aid governance in their campaigns. This referencing can be seen in the initiatives mentioned above: in the postcard campaign, in the MP study trips, in conferences and workshops organised across the country. But it was most visible in the Aid Watch campaign, which was organised annually by the Zagranica Group. This initiative was not an isolated, internal effort by Polish organisations to transform Polish ODA, but was inspired by the activities of the pan-European network of aid organisations, Concord. It was Concord that suggested, from Brussels, the form that reporting on country-specific

ODA should take, what sections should be included. While on other occasions the stubborn comparison of European countries, in which Eastern European countries were bound to lose, was a source of frustration and humiliation, in this case it was a source of empowerment. It gave Polish aid activists a framework within which they could identify much more than with the one promoted in their own country. The EU documents became *their* documents, to the extent that they quoted them as theirs:

> Never before have poverty eradication and sustainable development been more important. The context within which poverty eradication is pursued is an increasingly globalised and interdependent world; this situation has created new opportunities but also new challenges. Combating global poverty is not only a moral obligation; it will also help to build a more stable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable world, reflecting the interdependency of its richer and poorer countries. In such a world, we would not allow 1,200 children to die of poverty every hour. (European Commission 2006: 1)

This quote, from the European Consensus on Development, according to aid activists who used it to validate their position, even though according to them it presented 'an idealistic vision of the world', at the same time represented 'a very concrete, strategic document signed by the leaders of unified Europe in 2005' (Grupa Zagranica 2008: 5). This identification as professionals has been considered the ultimate goal with the highest status in the donor hierarchy, countering the notions of Poland being an emergent donor. In the text quoted above, a highly idealistic and political statement is rendered 'concrete and strategic'. The reference to the EU, a powerful international institution, is used to validate and justify the ideology used by Polish activists, who, if excluded from these networks of support, would risk coming across as naive missionaries or utopian activists. As a result, the supporters of ODA reforms were able to present themselves not only as passionate visionaries, engaged with the world, but at the same time, through reference to the EU, they could confirm their identity as professionals enmeshed in the international networks of experts (Tarrow 2005).

Transnational networks and institutions clearly played an important role in empowering local activists. However, as Green (2003: 135) observes, such strong unification of global models of governing aid can also lead to the production of a highly limited vision and the promotion of selective modes of action. As she noted, through international networks, 'global templates are imposed on local realities in

a kind of franchise of social and economic policies, creating a kind of hyperpolicy for the global non-places that recipients of development transfers become' (2003: 139). While Green discussed this process in relation to Tanzania, a recipient of international aid, my case shows that other actors – positioned in 'the North' and representing donor communities – are exposed to exactly the same processes. While countering the dominant Polish discourses on foreign aid (those emphasising Eastern Europe and democratisation) and trying to reorganise ODA, by heavily referencing transnational networks, Polish activists in fact reinforced the discourses that were dominant within Western Europe. The hope that emerging donors could shake up the existing norms and breathe fresh life into the development world was fading.

This specific history of emerging Polish ODA institutions is a great example to show how globalisation happens on the ground, how local institutions play on national and international pressure, and both voluntarily and involuntarily subscribe to dominant discourses. Poland's emergence as a donor, and the creation of ODA institutions in the country, was a process that involved all sorts of organisations – from very small NGOs and established organisations managing budgets worth millions of dollars, through the departments of state institutions, and up to international institutions. Polish practitioners travelled abroad to educate themselves and to participate in international forums. They willingly invited foreign experts to provide advice, but were also subjected to less voluntary scrutiny through peer review offered by OECD/DAC, or different funding bodies assessing the national and organisational capacities of Polish aid organisations. All of these people and institutions had an input in the creation of Polish ODA. Relationships between these stakeholders were encouraged by all sides (which is not to say they were always smooth or lacking in power struggles). They were very dynamic social assemblages, created and disrupted according to the needs of the members. They were a perfect example of what Zygmunt Bauman calls 'swarms'. They had no centres and no peripheries, or 'tops': 'it is solely the direction of their current flight that casts some of the self-propelled swarm units into the position of "leaders" to be "followed"; for the duration of a particular flight, or a part of it, though no longer' (Bauman 2009: 15). The hope of changing the world and eradicating poverty was the target guiding this 'swarm' of international activists. It was the dream of arriving at this goal through creating the ideal system of ODA that kept the 'swarm' alive and moving.

Like moths drawn to light, Polish aid activists were drawn to the big transnational organisations and the idea that state-centred ODA institutions were the way to govern global issues. The first promised them power; the latter fulfilled their dream of an ordered, manageable and controllable world. Paradoxically, the aid organisations, which usually stand against anything associated with bureaucracy, were in this case calling for the strengthening of the bureaucratic apparatus. For instance, the contributors to the 2008 NGO Aid Watch report argued:

> The MFA should coordinate the whole of Polish bilateral aid. The aid budget at the disposal of the MFA, compared with other bodies implementing aid, should continuously grow. Moreover, the MFA should as soon as possible apply programming instruments to distribute ODA: budget support as well as sector support. In accordance with the Paris Declaration for aid effectiveness, these instruments should be coordinated with other donors and their instruments of programming and needs assessment. (Grupa Zagranica 2008: 50)

This call for the centralisation of aid and its stronger bureaucratisation (through an emphasis on policies and strategy production) might come as a surprise, especially given that it was advocated by NGOs who were often associated with a bottom-up approach and anti-bureaucratic attitude. Insistence on the production of such official views, as Ellerman (2002) noticed, risks dogmatisation of the institution, leaving little space for negotiations and change (cf. Gardner and Lewis 2000). This perspective, however, was not seen by Polish activists as a threat, but as salvation from the existing messy arrangements. At the time, the lack of policies was perceived as a reflection of unbearable chaos, as well as the immature nature of the system: it was the seductive promise of Western actors visiting Poland and reviewing its ODA structures during the DAC accession process, emphasising the importance of state donor institutions for the successful implementation of international aid. Even though most Western countries struggle with their own aid policies and institutions, and the criticism surrounding their practices is overwhelming (Sen 1999; Moyo 2009), to their partners representing so-called 'non-traditional donors' such as Poland, they painted themselves as success stories, in which aid is governed by rational and ordered institutions, where aid priorities are selected based on in-depth needs assessments, thorough documentation and rational policies, rather than politically and culturally informed informal processes. Their recipe for success, which boiled down to one suggestion – create stronger ODA institutions – seemed easy to follow and promised success.

Indeed, participation in transnational networks not only provides empowerment through identification, but it also offers repertoires of actions, which as Alvarez (1998) points out, are typically of a bureaucratic nature. The choice of bureaucratic technologies (policies, laws) as the core tool for developmental activism is, as Escobar (1988: 431) notes, tightly linked with institutionalisation. For developers in Poland, it was hidden under the label of 'professionalisation'. As such, it was an expression of the ultimate dream of becoming recognised as an 'established' rather than 'emerging' donor. Furthermore, it was an expression of the idealistic visions of modernity (Herzfeld 1993), reflecting all of its qualities and characteristics: belief in reason, progress, knowledge production and so on. Hull (2008) argues that it is exactly this modern condition that determines the choice of bureaucratic tools as a means of governance and ordering reality (Law 1994). Studying land politics in Islamabad, he observed constant investment in the development of new recording techniques, despite, or rather due to the failure of existing methods. According to him, this stubborn obsession with new tools of bureaucracy (which resembles the fixation on the improvement of law and policy arrangements in Poland) might be attributed to the hope for a better future, for bringing about change, for the dream of perfection. Nuijten (2004) also drew a similar conclusion while studying land conflicts in Mexico, observing that bureaucratic procedures gave rise to the creation of a world of fantasy, generating a desire for a world of order. She noted that 'the stress on the importance of formal procedures suggests that there is some logic in the operation of the bureaucratic machine' (2004: 223). She also argues that this hope-generating function was a state function. However, as the Polish case suggests, the state was not the main, and certainly not the only actor obsessed with formalising the ODA structure. NGOs were equally, if not more interested in this process. It was the collective swarm of activists representing various institutions who wished to extend Polish involvement in global issues, and who formed assemblages of social actors oriented towards the same goal.

Bureaucratic Activism

The obsession with documents, legal acts, strategies and policies was not an attribute of the state institution, as some studies of policies have suggested (Shore and Wright 1995, 1997; Shore, Wright, and Wedel 1999), but was equally important for all activists both in the

Ministry and among NGOs. The obsession with reforming – though not abolishing – the system of governance was an expression of activism, of making change that would ultimately lead to the eradication of poverty in the world. Bureaucracy was not just an *object* of change, but a *tool* for it. In the above-mentioned conversation with Anna, we heard her explaining her ideas concerning her work with politicians, and how she hoped to change their attitudes towards foreign aid. After talking to her on this topic a few times, and hearing her rehearse the same slogans over and over again, I eventually tired of it, and in one of our conversations I impatiently interrupted her, saying: 'I am sorry, Anna, but I am just amazed: you speak with the language of your newsletter, do you know that?' I was really annoyed with her. I thought we were friends, but she still seemed to hide behind 'official' versions of the discourse promoted by the NGO, while I wanted to know what *she* thought. She was confused by my provocative comment and tried to explain herself:

> Well, I believe that everyone has their own ideology, really. … The truth is that at some point I realised that I really somehow believe in it. … Everyone chooses something. I am not a scholar; I am a person … a kind of activist. Someone who acts in the NGO and must believe in something in order to do it. … This is my ideology: I assume that there is a problem, that there is global poverty…

Laughing, she added: 'Oh Jesus, I am sorry, how else can I say it? Oh, you are just mean Ela, just drink your coffee'.

We continued our conversation in a friendly manner for another few hours, laughing about our mutual inability to move beyond our own professional jargon and mindsets. Although I had known Anna for some time, having shared the PAIN experience and also having studied together, and with time we had become good friends, in our conversations she continued to apply 'policy jargon', the discourse of her own beliefs expressing her political and social views. The documents she produced in her daily work were indeed expressions of her wishes and opinions. It was her, speaking through these documents. Anna, like most aid workers I met, was genuinely passionate, firstly about global issues and making change in the world, and secondly about creating better mechanisms for Polish aid in order to enable that change. From the interviews I conducted, and from the observations I made in the very first stages of Poland's emergence as a donor, it became clear that Polish developers invested very high hopes and trust in international aid instruments and institutions. The UN and the EU agendas on development aid were their agendas. They referenced them,

along with hundreds of other policies produced across the world, not only because they were useful for campaigning, but because they believed in their message. They also believed that such bureaucratic tools and institutions had the power to bring about social change.

They practised what I call *bureaucratic activism*, a hope that one can bring about social and political change in accordance with one's beliefs but also within the constrained environment of the institutionalised space of administration offices and NGOs. It is a form of activism that is practised via the tools associated with bureaucracy – documents, papers, board meetings, conferences. This form of activism is a major form of action for aid activists, independent of their institutional affiliation. Usually, the perception of the activist is of someone who is dynamic and who needs to act, who occupies public spaces and marches on the streets in massive protest actions. The general perception of the bureaucrat is the opposite. Bureaucrats and activists are not only different; they also usually meet on opposite sides of the barricade. But the case of Polish development shows that this does not have to be the case.

Even though the room for manoeuvre within a bureaucratic movement is limited by institutional constraints, many ministerial employees managed not only to maintain but also to expand their strong identification with aid ideals: their involvement in the reform of the system was motivated by their genuine interest in development issues and commitment to international assistance. Like other activists working for NGOs, they took their ideals very seriously and aimed to realise them via the bureaucratic tools available to them in the Ministry. At the same time, for members of NGOs, their own professionalisation and self-reproduction through documents was a way of seizing the state: influencing it and taking a lead in shaping state politics. NGO members and ministerial staff shared a belief in the rational system of governance, where good policies are implementable, and where the system can be presented as an ordered, coherent and manageable entity. This is why all of these actors put so much emphasis on generating documents and agitating for reform of the system.

The emphasis on this type of knowledge and regulations ought to work as a sign of the professional, serious and objective-independent character of the profession and the industry (Strathern 2000). It was exactly this ambition of the knowledge providers, who aimed to be recognised as serious experts, representing professional, efficient and mature organisations, that mobilised their emphasis on professionalisation, which was now taking the form of institutionalisation. This strategy was additionally validated by foreign experts, and the

taken-for-granted authority of 'established donors', who offered special workshops for the representatives of 'new donors' in which they propagated their own manuals and know-how, promising that their knowledge, if properly applied, had the potential to transform the efficiency and effectiveness of Polish aid agencies.

The focus on documents and the fetishisation of policies, juxtaposed with the difficulty of defining those documents in detail, suggests that the processes described constitute the reflection of a more general dream of creating an ideal system of aid. They stand for the fantasy of an organised and ordered social reality that would enable global social change. As Mosse (2005) has pointed out, this specific process of ordering and of making sense of development through the activity of model making is a constant effort to maintain and perpetuate the existence of the system itself: 'Models reveal and conceal, explain, justify, label and give meaning. It is through them that chaotic practices are stabilised, made coherent and validated for a project's various publics (donor managers, politicians, professionals)' (2005: 17). Yet while Mosse's analysis focuses on realities at the organisational level, taking place within the scope of one aid programme, the planning and creation of ideal models through bureaucratic activism is a characteristic condition of development per se, reflecting an insatiable, continuously maintained, restored and reconstituted hope for some new solution that finally, in some never-defined future, will allow the fulfilment of the promise of global development.

Whether we are discussing the project management techniques of particular NGO, the Act on Development Assistance or aid agencies at the state level, or considering international agreements, they all embody the hope of ordering, a fantasy of coherent and rational wholeness, unfragmented and manageable (Law 1994). From this perspective, the particular Polish endeavour to order the system via bureaucratic activism becomes just one of many expressions of sensemaking and organising the wider, global system of aid, a process best exemplified in such documents as the Cotonou Agreement (European Commission 2000), the Monterrey Consensus (United Nations 2003) and the MDGs (UN General Assembly 2000).

Depoliticisation

At the same time, the choice of bureaucratic activism converged with attempts to de-politicise foreign aid and render it a technical matter. The growing emphasis on efficiency, professionalisation and

obtaining expert status, the emerging institutionalisation of the aid industry, in fact impacts the possibility of social and political action (Alvarez 1999; Jad 2007). Indeed, the growing professionalisation of NGOs meant masking the political character of the postulates made by aid activists in their campaigns. Development issues and foreign aid are by nature political. Yet the action of the members of the monitoring group who dedicated a large proportion of their work to promoting the political agendas around how ODA should be constructed was hardly ever perceived as political. In the late 2000s Polish aid workers never defined their action in these terms. For them, the work on transforming ODA was a reflection of their professionalism, not a political act. The political meanings of foreign aid, the ideologies that were so craftily shaped through global education, have now been veiled and the structural element emphasised instead. This process can be understood in various ways.

Firstly, it reflects the ongoing manoeuvring of activists between being identified as 'missionaries' and as 'experts'. The first association, in which involvement in foreign aid is understood as a vocation motivated by strong beliefs and indeed political views about global injustices, is associated with a lack of professionalism. Effectively, those who aimed to be perceived as professionals substituted the direct language of political postulates with the language of 'expert knowledge'. Secondly, this process of de-politicisation was also a reflection of the particularly Polish history of social activism. The political processes that took place in the 1970s and 1980s and decided the formulation of the anti-state approach also resulted in non-political or even anti-political approaches to social activism today (Gellner 1994; Renwick 2006; Drążkiewicz 2016). This attitude, even though formed in a specific historical context, is still strong within Polish NGOs. Even young NGO activists define themselves as apolitical (a term that has become part of the official manifestos of some NGOs), even if their engagement is clearly political.

This anti-political approach, characteristic of social activism in Poland of the late 2000s, once again left a mark on the way in which foreign aid was done, now becoming visible in the emphasis on policy-based solutions. As Shore and Wright (1997: 6) observe, 'policy is still frequently treated as if it were politically and ideologically neutral', as if it had no ideological or moral underpinnings. Given the aversion of NGOs in the country to politics, their focus on policy making as ideally a non-political tool for governance might be treated as an expression of their anti-political attitudes. Such motives became even more transparent in the desire to move the management of ODA out

of the MFA, and the desire for the creation of a separate agency. While this anti-political approach could be treated as a Polish peculiarity, it corresponds well with the general trend in the international aid industry. In his influential *The Anti-politics Machine*, Ferguson (1994) observed a sort of 'quiet' de-politicisation of development. He argued that rendering development as a technological issue masked the actual political reasoning behind it and its political effects. In the case I had a chance to observe in Poland, this process of de-politicisation was very straightforward and intentional. In the process of discussing ODA arrangements, it was verbalised in a desire for the creation of an agency. As suggested by one of the panellists discussing 'the role of NGOs in formulating and implementing foreign policy' during the Fifth National NGO Forum in Warsaw in 2008, the creation of a separate agency and moving Polish aid out of the MFA would 'finally allow de-politicisation of foreign aid'. He, like many other activists, hoped that such a move would free ODA from political influences like those exemplified above in the parliamentary decision-making process that defines the aim of the budgetary reserve from which ODA is funded. Furthermore, it was expected that the future agency would become a professional institution of experts, rather than aspiring diplomats for whom work in the Department for Development Cooperation at MFA was considered a means of career advancement.

However, as Ferguson points out, the political realm is wider than the influence of politicians, and no matter how well they are hidden behind technological terms, the effects of development at large and foreign aid in particular always remain political. In this regard, the hope of Polish aid activists to cleanse Polish aid of its political contamination simply by lifting it out of the direct influence of politicians can be questioned. At the same time, the Polish case might add some new elements to Ferguson's argument. As we can see in this case, de-politicisation was not an unwanted or unintentional effect, but a conscious choice for many aid activists. What is interesting in this case is the very meaning of politics, which was considered an obstacle in the process of ordering and an obstruction to the creation of a new, coherent and synthetic system of aid, and hence in need of eradication. Perceived as messy, politics presents a risk for the general efforts of ordering the system. NGO activists not only wanted to free foreign aid from the 'political' (i.e. politicians), but they also rarely, if ever, defined their own activities or aid issues as political. For them, legal acts, documents and policy papers were 'technological' tools, expressive of the professionalism of their practice, rather than a means of governance or expressions of political views.

Conclusions

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, empowered by transnational networks and equipped with the technologies of bureaucratic activism, aid activists choose the technologies of modernity to undertake their political action of fighting poverty and pursuing foreign aid. In this way, they strive to achieve the goal of becoming an 'established donor' and seal the expert status of their own cohort. Driven by the hope of being accepted into the Western club of the most prominent donors, they comply with Western ideas about modernity. As this chapter shows, the final step in this process was an effort to instil order and to eliminate any contamination, which took the form of aestheticised visions of the future embodied in neatly shaped plans, models and policies. Dismissed by aid activists as contamination, politics was overtaken by aesthetic visions of foreign aid ideology and their particular bureaucratic expressions: policies and legal acts.

In their battle for a new perfect order, aid activists became fixated on planning and policy making, in other words bureaucratic activism, a method for action reflecting the ideals of modernity. West and Sanders (2003: 16) argued that modernity is experienced by many as contradictory, fragmented and a 'disquieting process that produces untenable situations and unfulfilled desires and that power is, in the modern world, perceived by many to be something that lies beyond their grasp'. Even though the aid system, one of the purest embodiments of modernity, was indeed experienced as unsettling, messy and difficult to handle, these feelings were, for the supporters of foreign aid, not overpowering but quite contrary. Driven by the urge to be recognised as 'established donors', aid activists did not lose hope in recreating the system. Chasing the ideal of modernity, in their efforts to create an ideally modern (objective, rational, synthetic and manageable) aid system as prescribed by their Western partners, they constantly revealed the faults of the existing structural, institutional or legal arrangements, making every effort to reshape and reform them. Drawing on the repertoire promoted by transnational activists (mostly Western), they invested their hopes in visions of the ideal system that expressed hope for a better future. According to this perpetuated fantasy, a new, improved system would allow the correction of existing problems with aid and lead to the eradication of poverty. As Rist (2002: 23) puts it, 'just as Christians know all about the numerous crimes committed in the name of their faith, yet continue to uphold it, so do the "development" experts increasingly recognise

the mistakes without questioning their reasons for soldiering on'. For them, problems with development and international aid are a temporary condition, the solution to which lies in a better-structured future. Policies were, therefore, not just a way of governing those subjected to them (which, as Scott [1998] and Mosse [2005] show is an ineffective practice) but, in this case, an attempt to govern the visions of the future, conceptualised in the form of perfect models, laws and plans. All these practices were an attempt to produce meaning. As Merry (1992: 361) demonstrates, such manipulations of systems can be understood as attempts to construct an interpretation of truth that others will accept. In the case of this emerging donor, this strategy allowed the myth of development, and moral economies of international aid (described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4), to be rendered into a professional, 'objective' task. The dreams, visions and ideologies mobilising belief in foreign aid as a solution to global problems could now be encapsulated and stabilised in the technical frame of policies, presenting themselves as fulfilling the standards of Western modernity, as rational and hence unquestionable. They became not only the tools of the aid apparatus, but at the same time justifications for its existence.

Notes

1. Stenograph 604 from the 43rd Foreign Affairs Committee meeting on 11 December 2008, http://ww2.senat.pl/k7/kom/ksz/2008/043sz.htm (accessed 30 July 2019).
2. There are many examples of such initiatives in which Polish actors 'learn' from their Western partners. They include: the 'Global Development and the New EU Member States – Time for a Re-launch?' conference, organised by the Polish Humanitarian Action and Global Development Research Group (GDRG) in May 2011; the Academy of International Development Cooperation organised by GDRG in 2010/2012; the discussion panel 'Dutch and Norwegian Experience in the Field of Development Co-operation – Implications for Poland' that took place at the III Development Cooperation Forum organised by the MFA; the aforementioned study trips for MPs that were organised as part of the international project 'To Act You Have to Know', an initiative under which Polish MPs did not visit the project sites of Polish NGOs but instead looked at initiatives implemented by Western organisations and state institutions; and the project 'Global Rights, Europeans Acting Together' in which the Polish agents were the PAH and Education for Democracy Foundation and whose members had a chance to take part in

'study trips' to project sites run by Action Aid and Terre des Hommes, where they could learn about the human rights approach to development. The list could also include various documents such as 'Mechanisms of Private Sector Involvement in Development Cooperation – Guidelines for Poland', which was ordered by the MFA and prepared by GDRG, and included descriptions of Austrian, Danish, French, Swedish and German examples that provide possible solutions to analogous issues in Poland.

3. Among them were USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute for International Affairs, the German Marshall Fund US, the Westminster Foundation, the MATRA Programme of the Netherlands, the Conrad Adenauer Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the European Partnership for Democracy and the Policy Association for an Open Society.

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Conclusion

Institutionalised Dreams

In this book I have given my account of the processes behind Poland's emergence as an EU donor. I have analysed the dynamics shaping the contemporary Polish aid apparatus and Polish involvement in Africa. In looking at the emerging aid machinery, my focus has been on the ways in which aid actors manoeuvre between the domestic realities of donors and international geopolitics; between personal motivations and institutionalised modes of fulfilling those agendas; between the conceptualisation of the aid pursuit as a moral calling and simultaneous formulations of aid tasks in terms of professional endeavours undertaken by cohorts of experts.

As I demonstrate, the emergence of the aid apparatus requires the coexistence of all these elements, even if they often seem to contradict one another. Aid apparatuses, especially the Western incarnations that are most studied, are often presented as de-politicised technologies of social change, as faceless tools created to promote neoliberal ideologies (Escobar 1991; Ferguson 1994). However, as the Polish case demonstrates, formulations of the aid pursuit that prioritise mechanical and 'rational' policy-oriented models are an outcome of the complicated processes behind the establishment of donors, rather than a special characteristic of the aid industry per se. As I argue, the formulation of aid through institutionalised lenses, presented as a highly organised and professional system, is on the one hand a result of subscription to the ideals of modernity. On the other hand, it is a reflection of the current trends and dominant discourses of aid as promoted by mainstream Western donors. However, as the

existence of stakeholders such as Poland indicates, the aid apparatus is not simply a reflection of the imposition of 'Western' ideals on other actors, and a binary opposition of 'the West versus the rest'. Instead it presents a more complicated and multi-layered dynamic of international socio-political relations. For donors, such as those in Poland, who have themselves been exposed to modernity discourses and foreign aid, subscription to the technocratic ideals promoted by 'traditional donors' is a way of claiming recognition as 'mature' and professional donors. As a result, even though Poland's emergence as a donor is linked to the promise of developing others, the establishment of the aid apparatus is strongly shaped by Polish society's own struggle to be defined as a 'modern society' and serious aid provider.

These processes of institutionalisation, leading to the formulation of expert culture, are an important element in the justification of donors' endeavours – both domestically and internationally. However, there are also other elements that play a crucial role in the establishment of aid institutions. These include the formulation of moral discourses about caring about distant others, as well as the mobilisation of sentiments and fantasies about the world of those who supposedly require international assistance. As I demonstrated, while aid missions are often the undertakings of individuals, in order to sustain and legitimise themselves they require social, political and financial support. This support is obtained through framing the aid cause in such a way as to secure people's readiness to make sacrifices for a greater, moral goal (cf. Fisher 1997; Lister 2003; Hilhorst 2003; Murdock 2003; Stirrat 2008). I argue that the existence of the aid apparatus depends on moral paradigms and the remobilisation of representations of the Other, who is not merely 'exotic' but also 'needy'.

As observed in the processes behind Polish aid to Africa, the establishment of the aid apparatus requires the mobilisation of moral discourses of caring at a distance, built on the perpetual reproduction of otherness. However, their legitimisation depends upon the conceptualisations of aid in terms of highly professional, expert endeavours. The more aid is emphasised as a 'rational', scientific system of aid, the less visible the other (moral, personal, etc.) sides of the aid industry become. Even though, as I demonstrate, to emerge as a donor the mobilisation of specific emotions and moralities must take place, in order to fit into the existing 'standards' of international aid giving, those features must be masked or even (officially) rejected.

Perhaps this is why so many scholars, taking for granted official discourses of aid, have so far omitted the consideration of personal callings and moral motivations from their examination of the ways

in which international aid is conceived of and done. However, as I have demonstrated, foreign aid is inseparable from morality. I suggest that moral economies of international aid play an extremely important role in the process of emerging as a donor, with religious concepts and institutions strongly infiltrating the ways in which aid is conceived of and done. Indeed, as the Polish case shows, the relationship between aid activists and the Church is very strong, with religious institutions coexisting in harmony with aid agents, fashioning themselves as the vanguards of aid pursuit. This link between aid and religion is on display in the operational modes of foreign aid: Polish missionaries enable aid activists' access to African communities and set the patterns for work modalities. It is also visible on subtler, ontological levels represented in the domestic arena – in the models of thinking about poverty, compassion and aid, which evoke Catholic notions of sacrifice, and associations of caring for global 'family'. Given popular presumptions about Poland as a highly Catholic country, one might be tempted to conclude that the proximity of the Church in international assistance is a specifically Polish characteristic of the aid apparatus. However, as evidence from around the world suggests, such conclusions are misleading. Today, various churches are officially recognised partners for aid super powers such as the World Bank (Belshaw, Calderisi, and Sugden 2001). Many religious organisations enjoy the status of influential aid actors. These cases, illustrating links between aid, the Church and moralities, suggest that the Polish case might represent a wider phenomenon, in which foreign aid has more to do with religion than previously assumed. However, the current regime of neutrality operating through the dichotomies of private–public and religious–secular results in the masking of the tight interconnection of aid and religion among Western donors. Motivated by the ambition to be accepted by this community of aid providers, Polish stakeholders take care to fulfil this ideal promoted in the mainstream discourses. As a result, foreign aid is represented not only as anti-political, as was observed by Ferguson (1994), but also as anti-religious, or even anti-ideological.

Apart from specifically Christian ideas, other visions are also involved in constructing ideological backing for the aid apparatus, defining its central myth of sustainable development and motivating social support. As I demonstrate, a central power in this construction process is the 'development sense', which enables the perception of the world as organised by the powers of development. It defines the Polish position in the international arena as an enabler of social

change and progress. It provides a totalising lens through which the world is perceived and described. It is a lens in which development issues become the focus, the primary organising feature. This sense operates through the mobilisation of a new – 'expert' – science, which has an ambition to redefine the ways in which the world is perceived and experienced. As Escobar (1988: 432) notes, the power of development lies in the creation of a new science of economics. Yet, as I demonstrate, in the Polish case, this power is not limited to economics, but is a far more ambitious endeavour, encompassing such disciplines as geography, politics, social sciences and history. It is made possible by global education platforms receiving strong financial and logistical support from international organisations, state institutions and NGOs.

The construction of the development sense enables the formulation of global problems (and solutions to them) in terms of international assistance. As such, it plays an important role in validating the process of emergence as a donor. It is also of crucial importance in defining trajectories and potential 'partners' of aid involvement. In global education programmes, which aim to be platforms for promoting global connectivity, the choice of topics and the regions covered is highly selective, pointing to the regions that aid activists want to define as in need of their intervention. In the Polish case, these programmes are particularly concerned with Africa. According to aid activists, Polish history has been separated from African issues, so global education programmes use the power of the development gaze to create a missing connection with the imagined, distant, African needy. Their aim is to construct feelings of interconnectivity. Envisaged as the 'non-place', in these programmes Africa is rendered into a place in need of aid. Such a strong emphasis on Africa, and the omission of other regions from the debate, results in development issues being linked exclusively to this continent. Effectively, development education programmes become platforms for generating public support for Polish involvement in Africa, a trajectory coinciding with the interests of a small but growing cohort of Polish Afrophiles, and the priorities of Western aid providers orchestrating the aid activities of the EU.

As I demonstrate, the aid activists behind these schemes aim to achieve these goals by creating feelings of interconnectivity with the African Other through mobilising emotional compassion. The capacity of the aid gaze to achieve the goal of feeling interconnected is enhanced by crafting potential subjects of aid intervention in terms of sensual experience. It is also strengthened by the beautification and

romanticisation of tragedy, and the idealisation of poverty. In order to mobilise support for international assistance, tragedy becomes an aesthetic subject of touch and passion. It is formed as idealised visions, purveyed by aesthetic realism and populist nostalgia. These aesthetics of poverty derive from the assumed and anticipated misery of those in Africa. According to Bourdieu (1984), aesthetics in the Western world always express social distinction and judgements. Consequently, such strong aestheticisation of representation of the 'Global South' becomes an expression of social distinction, which is used as validation for external intervention. Difference, whether economic, political, social or cultural, forms the basis of the claim that intervention is needed; this is how the myth of foreign aid is perpetuated. Consequently, for the aid myth to be effective, constant rediscovery of the distant Other must take place. This is why, while on the one hand aid agents build their actions upon universalistic claims of global solidarity and interconnectivity, on the other they strongly emphasise particularistic world visions.

These characteristics are on display not only in global education programmes implemented domestically, but also in the ways in which aid workers conceive of their experiences at the mission sites. In those distant locations, local communities subjected to aid are being perpetually 'discovered' as different and hence in need of intervention. However, this difference, conceptualised in terms of authenticity, is translated into a need for protection. Consequently, the myth of foreign aid envisages distant others as in need of reform, but also as requiring protection from the uncontrolled effects of rapid change. As Baaz (2005) observes, this practice of contemporary aid reflects old colonial dynamics of domination and expansion. According to this logic, the colonised/developed – the African Other – should become like the coloniser/developer, but at the same time remain 'itself' (authentic) and different (from the foreign partners) (Baaz 2005: 45).

The need for the constant rediscovery of the Other not only perpetuates and validates foreign aid ideology; it also works on a very basic level as one of the primary motivations for various individuals to get involved in aid. As I argue, just as in the era of colonial explorations described by Fabian (2000: 16), a driving force behind aid today is the tension between an imagined Africa and the experience of it, between a desire to explore the continent and to research it as an expert, between a devotion to ideals of bringing about social justice and the pursuit of 'pragmatic' development goals. These are the forces constituting the motivation to join the cohorts of aid

workers, and to lead the life of an expatriate. The urge to experience Otherness and the moral calling to aid Others, and to become an aid expert, constitute equal motivations for becoming an aid worker. These motivations coexist, strongly reinforcing one another. It is due to the coexistence of all these elements that the aid movement can count on a constant influx of new members, and the emergence of new aid actors. As I demonstrate, these feelings are not random or exceptional expressions of individual callings. They become institutionalised and incorporated into the organisational structures of aid agencies, directing life at the mission sites. In these processes, aid work is conceptualised in terms of sacrifice, expeditions, heroic adventures and missions. Such formulations perpetuate the need for the constant discovery and conquest of new lands in urgent need of aid projects. They also facilitate the emergence of new donors and the sustaining of existing aid enterprises.

Both the formulation of the aid gaze in terms of sensual experiences (as described in the case of global education schemes) and the perception of aid workers as semi-explorers/semi-engineers of progress, whose expertise is strongly dependent on the experience of 'being there', are crucial for the stabilisation of the aid myth. The visualisation of particular countries and regions (here exemplified by the case of Africa) as a sensual experience leads to the presentation of theories related to them, as something natural and empirical. Instead of presenting themselves as abstract mirages and fantasies, through the evocation of the senses, these visions become represented as 'touchable' experiences. Effectively, aid locations (and the aid prescriptions envisaged for them) can be drawn realistically and enter the domain of the objective when they are described in such a way (cf. Mitchell 2002: 210). For emerging donors, such as Poland, whose acceptance in global arenas and support within domestic constituencies depends on their ability to present their systems of aid as modern, predominantly pragmatic, rational and objectified, this process of 'rationalising' fantasies about Otherness and ideas about caring at a distance constitutes a crucial step on their path to gaining the status of 'established donors'. Although the making of the aid apparatus is strongly rooted in highly personal experiences and culturally specific moral economies, in order to sustain the system and make it legitimate, it must be represented as 'objective'. As a result, mission sites are rendered as scientific laboratories testing particular social and economic theories and visions of modernity (cf. Rabinow 1989).

While regimes of 'Western' modernity are crucial elements shaping the Polish approaches to aid, other, national factors influence the

ways in which aid is done and conceived of in Poland. Polish aid activists need to satisfy the domestic public, not just comply with the expectations of transnational aid networks, so they also mobilise national ideologies, nostalgias and histories. In the Polish case, this has been especially evident in the conceptualisation of official aid discourses in terms of reciprocity. In this case, aid became framed as a way of paying back the debt that Poland and Polish society owes from benefitting from various foreign assistance programmes. The national orientation is also visible in the discourses that explain Polish involvement in the world as proof of its modernity, and hence explain Poland's ability to prescribe progress recipes for others. This rhetoric, while addressing ideas about the country's internal condition, also reflects national identity politics in relation to external actors. It speaks to the visions that aim to further Poland's position in global power relations. According to these visions, the world is organised around the economic categories of rich and poor. It is a world presented as an annotated map, indicating those who give and those who receive. As I demonstrate, however, these categories are not fixed. The map is in a constant process of redefinition, with Poland battling to relocate from the category of receivers to givers, from the Second World to the First, from the East to the West, from the Global South to the Global North and so on. As such, international aid represents a microcosm of national foreign policies and global relations (cf. Rioux and Van Belle 2005: 481).

However, development not only reflects international politics; it also shapes it, constituting an important technology of globalisation. Indeed, Eyben (2000) argued that the end of the Cold War would lead to the reformulation of aid discourse as a substitute for globalisation. Indeed, especially for emerging donors like Poland, globalisation (through discourses of global interconnectivity and global solidarity) is used as validation for claiming the right and obligation to get involved in international aid. In such formulations, globalisation becomes a celebrated ideological justification for foreign interventionism. While globalisation is declared as exercised on behalf of the poor, in these cases it does not contest and reverse the forms of knowledge produced by corporate capital and nation-state systems, as Appadurai (1999, 2000) or Graeber (2005) would hope.

The transnational process through which aid operates does not mean the end of the nation state. As the Polish case demonstrates, in order to motivate international assistance, highly nationalistic nostalgias and specific state images must be mobilised. Furthermore, while aid activists are interested in exposing the weaknesses of the state, at

the same time they have a strong interest not just in seizing the state (actively shaping its policies, holding it accountable but also expressing the feelings of ownership), but in making it a key aid technology via formulation of strong ODA structures. As I demonstrate in Poland, the state and NGO activists have more in common with each other than they would like to admit. As a result, state and civil society actors are no longer (if they ever were) opposing bodies, but instead form a hybrid of institutions (NGOs, state institutions, international agencies), which together create complex configurations of power.

In Poland, aid activists representing all sorts of organisations have opted for the same modes of social action, which I define as bureaucratic activism. Investing their hopes in the eradication of global inequalities through the formation of an ideal aid system, many organisations choose widely defined policies and legal solutions as the tools of their activism. Presented as technical, de-politicised methods of governance, these tools were envisaged as markers of objectivism, professionalism and expertise. Such a choice of institutional arenas and bureaucratic technologies is not simply instrumental, but as I argue, reflects activists' belief that policies have the power to bring about change through their capacity to order social realities. In this case, the bureaucratic tools of modernity – policies and strategies – have been envisioned as ordering solutions, ways to purify the messy system, in which complexity, heterogeneity and inconsistency are perceived as the main reasons for the constant failure of the aid endeavour.

Indeed, in the process of emerging as a donor, the creation of an effective, perfect aid system has been one of the key goals on the aid activists' agenda. The aid system has been considered as the main element conditioning the success or failure of the aid pursuit. In its ideal (yet-to-be-achieved) form, the system is envisioned as a potential solution to all aid problems. It epitomises the qualities associated with modernity: professionalism, rationalism, coherence, reason and order.

These qualities are located in an unspecified future; they are still to be achieved. Effectively, the realisation of the aid myth has been presented as a form of potentiality, with success always postponed until the ideal order is achieved. Such formulations are dependent on the perception of the existing aid system, which is seen as a faulty determinant of the current inefficient and unsuccessful aid schemes. This situation is attributed by aid activists to the 'emergent' quality of the system and its novelty. The view of the aid system as disorganised is further enhanced by the fact that it encompasses different

categories of stakeholders, scattered across various geographical locations. While the system is heavily fragmented, its parties are still strongly dependent on each other: the field team depends on local organisations and the organisational headquarters in Warsaw; the NGO depends on donor politics; the Ministry depends on other international institutions and so on. Nevertheless, the aid apparatus presents itself as highly fragmented. The understanding of the system consists of scraps only. The whole picture is never there, but understanding it is essential to enable the coexistence and collaboration of all stakeholders involved. This is why a sense of wholeness and consistency needs to be carefully crafted. Policies, laws and strategy papers are envisioned as the perfect tools for achieving this goal, like road signs, enabling one to manoeuvre within the complicated aid machinery. As I argue, the choice of these technologies of bureaucratic activism was related to their status as markers of professionalism and objectivism, representing the 'victory of reason' and perfectly manageable and ordered modernity. However, as I argue, belief in the modernist qualities of these tools is an expression of the very specific fantasy in which the world can be managed and form a rigid, perfectly ordered reality.

As I have demonstrated in this book, in order to emerge as a donor, moral foundations, political discourses and specific fantasies of the Other must be mobilised. It is through these processes that the aid myth is formulated, and faith in aid intervention as a solution to global issues is generated. Paradoxically, however, for all these elements to be stabilised and naturalised, they must fade into the background. What comes to the foreground are institutionalised 'technological' and 'objective' aid systems. While the aid myth has been built on moral grounds and the mobilisation of fantasies about distant others and their needs, the solution to such defined problems is conceptualised through 'objective' and 'rational' technologies of bureaucratic activism. According to 'Western' modernity, qualities such as private and public, morality and reason, or fantasy and reality should be strongly separated from each other. However, as I argue, in the case of foreign aid they are highly dependent on each other: the creation of the 'objective' aid system is a response to the highly personal moral economies of aid. In the constantly perpetuated and reinvented narratives of idealised aid systems, the fantasy of the perfect (modern) order is further reinforced.

As a consequence of the close correlation of these features, a constant lack of satisfaction with the actual state of affairs is not a reason to dismiss the myth of aid and question its foundations, but instead

an impulse for yet another attempt to reform the system. The belief that the perfect order might be created, that the ideal system might actually be formed and bring about social change, sustains faith in international aid. What is needed is simply yet another modification of the system, yet another redefinition of aid, yet another small reform of the aid apparatus. As a result, the process of emerging as a donor is never complete and never satisfactory. It can be perpetuated forever, perhaps until the myth of modernity and development is finally questioned and contested.

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