



# Autonomy-Respecting Help: Rethinking Development Assistance Agencies

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# Helping Relations: Helper-Doer



- ✍ Development: Agency-Government (Hirschman, Schumacher)
- ✍ Management: Manager-Worker (McGregor)
- ✍ Education: Teacher-Learner (Dewey, Freire)
- ✍ Psychology: Therapist-Patient (Carl Rogers)
- ✍ Community: Organizer-Community Group (Alinsky)
- ✍ Counseling: Counselor-Client (Kierkegaard)
- ✍ General Form: Helper-Doer

# Goal = Autonomy-Respecting Help



- ✍ Autonomy-respecting form of assistance = “Helping people help themselves.”
- ✍ Many Helper-Doer relationships: using commonalities to triangulate on theory of autonomy-respecting help.
- ✍ Fundamental Conundrum of "assisted self-help":
  - \* If helper is “making a difference”, is doer autonomous?
  - \* If doer is autonomous, then what is role of helper?
- ✍ Much help is unhelpful: overrides or undercuts capacity for self-help or autonomy.

# Unhelpful Help #1: Social Engineering



- ✍ Helper as social engineer supplies plan, and
- ✍ Helper supplies “motivation” to follow plan.
- ✍ Doers’ own plans & motivation overridden.
- ✍ Alternative to social engineering:
  - \* Helpers need to find projects where doers are own-motivated independent of aid,
  - \* Helpers supply aid to cover partial costs of doers’ own-motivated projects.

# Alternative Indirect Approach to \$-Aid



- ✍ "The best kind of help to others, whenever possible, is indirect, and consists in such modifications of the conditions of life, of the general level of subsistence, as enables them independently to help themselves." John Dewey
- ✍ Helpers cannot supply own-motivation but must "find virtue afoot"--and then supply some \$-aid.
- ✍ But need judgment since money-moving pressures
  - ✍ large Type II errors of accepting camouflaged aid-seeking projects

## Unhelpful Help #2: Benevolent Relief



- ✍ World full of disasters that need relief--but relief is simply *not* Dev. Assistance.
- ✍ Charity corrupts; long-term charity corrupts long term.
- ✍ Self-help is undertaken to avoid negative or get positive outcomes--benevolent aid allows doers to directly avoid negative or get positive results without developing self-help capacity. Thus benevolent aid **undercuts** self-help capacity.
- ✍ Major problem in today's "development industry" is charitable relief repackaged as "development assistance"-- which in fact undercuts capacity development.

# Example of Social Funds



- ✍ Social funds are special clean technocratic agencies outside sectorial ministries.
- ✍ Funded by hard currency loans and donor funds.
- ✍ Bypasses regional & local governments
- ✍ Makes (near) grants to communities to fund local infrastructure projects or other accepted community projects.

# Social Funds Controversy



|                             | SF Supporters                                       | SF Critics                                      |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Separate Organization       | Bypass corrupt local govt                           | Central govt largess                            |
| People choose grant project | Bottom-up demand-driven                             | Top-down paternalism--no capacity building      |
| Evaluation                  | Impact evaluation of \$X with counterfactual of \$0 | Impact ignores costs +has phoney counterfactual |

# Development Aid as Moral Hazard



✍ Insurance: moral hazard softens the incentives to take normal precautions.

\* Partial Cure: co-pay & deductibles help to motivate investment to take precautions.

✍ Development: Aid softens the incentives for self-help.


\* Partial Cure: substantial matching or first stage funding requirement restores self-help incentive. Then doing project shows own motivation.

# Marshall Plan & Moral Hazard



“Although American aid has been a necessary remedy over a period, and will continue to be for a time, one is bound to acknowledge that in the long run it has had dangerous psychological and political effects. ? It is making more difficult the task of the governments of Western Europe trying to bring about a thorough economic and financial rehabilitation. The idea that it is always possible to call on American aid, that here is the ever-present cure for external payments deficits, is a factor destructive of willpower. It is difficult to hope that, while this recourse continues to exist, the nations of Western Europe will apply, for a sufficient length of time, the courageous economic and financial policy that will enable them to meet their needs from their own resources without the contribution of external aid.” (1952 memo quoted in Marjolin, Robert. *Architect of European Unity: Memoirs 1911-1986*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989, 241).

# Scylla & Charybdis of Dev. Assist.

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- ✍ Scylla = Enlightened impulse to do social engineering (mostly economists)
  - ✍ Charybdis = Benevolent impulse to do charitable relief.
  - ✍ *Pons Asinorum* is the recognition that:
    - \* Not the “What” of reform that counts but the “How” if reform is to actually work. Trying to “engineer” the “what” gets the “how” wrong.
    - \* “Doing good” that undercuts self-help capacity isn’t doing good.

# The Three Dos



- ✍ **First Do: Start from Where the Doers Are.**
  - \* Bolshevik/Jacobin impulse: wipe slate clean of old, flawed, distorted, or evil institutions.
  - \* Alternative: Better to evolve from where doers are.
- ✍ **Second Do: See World Through Doers' Eyes**
  - \* Dev. professional helpers' view of problems.
  - \* Alternative: Dewey learner-centered, Rogers client-centered, Freire problem-centered pedagogy, Buber "experiencing the other" etc.
- ✍ **Third Do: Above All Else, Respect Autonomy of Doers.**

# Hirschman as Alternative Indirect Approach



- ✍ Social Eng. = Big Push Balanced Growth Plans
- ✍ Alternative: Unbalanced growth driven by endogenous linkages and pressures.
- ✍ Rage to Conclude vs. Social Learning process
- ✍ Helper as Reformmonger:
  - \* Find where virtue is afoot on its own.
  - \* Supply advice & aid to modestly help without overriding or undercutting endogenous connections, linkages, and forces.

# Finding and Scaling Up Motivation



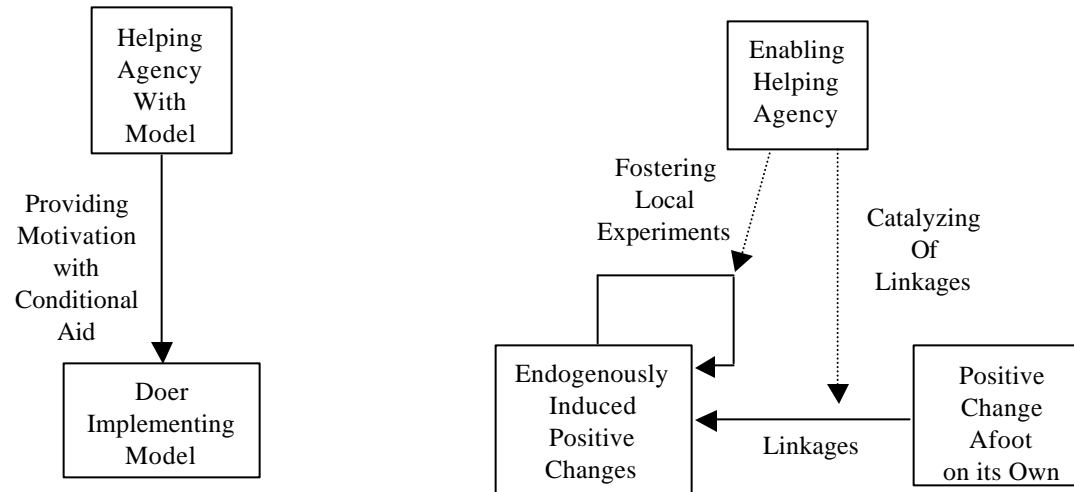
## Social Engineering model:

- \* Center (lending or donor agency) supplies motivation in conditional aid.
- \* Reform to get aid leads to gaming, little ownership & poor implementation.

## “Hirschmanian” Alternative:

- \* Find positive change started on its own in the small.
- \* Catalyze endogenous linkages to spread changes.

# Two Motivational Strategies



# Finding and Scaling Up Learning



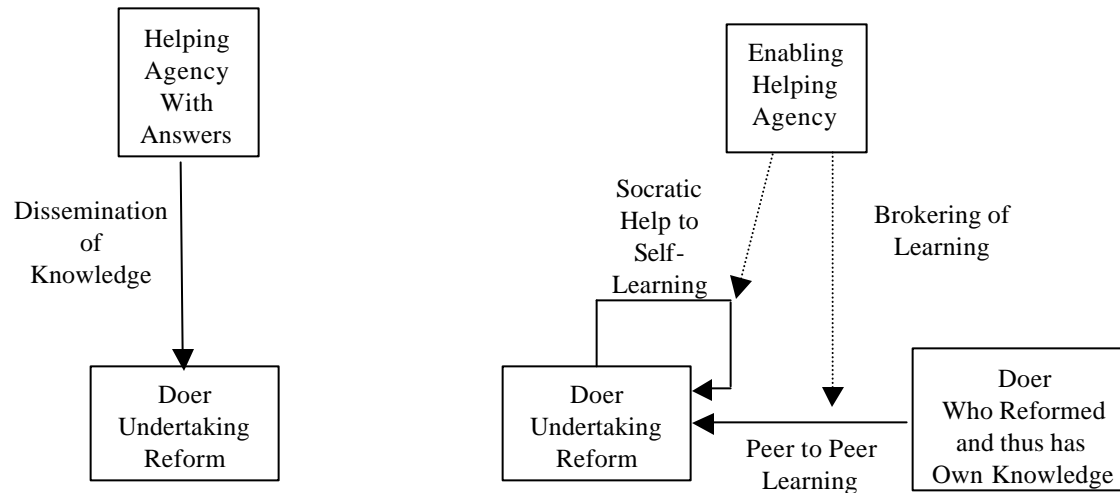
## Center-Periphery or Hub-Spokes model

- \* Center does learning & decides policies
- \* Disseminates answers to periphery
- \* Evaluation checks implementation of central policy.

## Decentralized Social Learning Model

- \* Foster local experiments
- \* Center scans for & evaluates local successes
- \* Center brokers peer-to-peer cross-learning & local reinvention of successes.

# Two Knowledge Strategies



## Common Theme: Autonomy-Respecting Assistance



### Respecting Volitional Autonomy:

- \* Cannot "engineer" autonomous transformation.
- \* Find where virtue is afoot in the small
- \* Provide background aid to strengthen, catalyze & spread virtue.

### Respecting Cognitive Autonomy:

- \* Do not "disseminate answers."
- \* Socratic Help: Foster experiments and discovery
- \* Brokering: Propagate local successes.