Book review

Emma Crewe and Elizabeth Harrison (1998).Whose development? Ethnography of Aid. New York: Zed Books

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'Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid' is a book written in 1998 by two scholars who have ample experience both as academicians and practitioners. One of the authors, Elizabeth Harrison, is a lecturer in social anthropology at the University of Sussex, the School of African and Asian Studies. She carried out research in sub-Saharan Africa and Sri Lanka. She also worked as an advisor to multi-lateral and non-governmental organizations on gender and natural resource management. The other author, Emma Crewe, is a researcher at the department of anthropology, University College of London. She carried out research in South Asia, East Africa and Europe. She also worked with governmental and nongovernmental organizations including the British development agency, Intermediate Technology.

Building concepts in line with the anthropology of development, the authors explored social relationships and political processes that underpin aid industries in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and USA. The aim of the book is to look at the complicated interactions involved in the process of development aid. Methodologically speaking, the strength of the book is manifested in its use of multiple research methods and data sources. As indicated in the title, the book employed conventional ethnographical techniques to gather data from a number of actors that are involved in the aid industry. Here, employing ethnographical techniques provide a nuanced picture in how different actors are involved in the development process.

The writers analysed their own lived experiences while they did field work with well-known development agencies. They did have a great deal of observation and understanding about the aid industry as they work with huge organizations like Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

and Intermediate Technology (IT), the British charitable organization. They also have ample experience with other multi-lateral development agencies and conducted observations at different settings that make the results complementary.

The writers obtained a great deal of information through interviews and conversations with a number of individuals and group of people who were involved in 'aid industries' including planners, advisers, project staff, beneficiaries and other actors. Case studies were employed to show success and failure of development projects. Here, experiences are illustrated with two case studies; one is the fish farming experience by FAO and the other is stove development experience by Intermediate Technology. The writers also included policy documents that reappraise some policy analysis of development practices. In addition, discourse analysis was employed to some extent. In this case, some speeches and texts were analyzed to support empirical evidence that was gathered through the indicated tools.

The book dominantly employed postmodern theoretical orientation and the writers are also known for their postmodern inclination. They repeatedly tried to show how local realities have much credibility in their context than universal realities and the book showed the need for representing the formerly marginalized groups like indigenous minorities, women, the poor and others. It also gave emphasis to historical and cultural realities which have been neglected by the mainstream development discourses and practices. On top of that, as the book was written during the postmodern era, it holds the deconstruction of the notions of modernization.

The major themes of the book addressed activities related to aid industry and its actors including donors, practitioners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The transfer of development works from the state to NGOs has a paradigm shift, especially to the mainstream development discourses and practices. Donor agencies and governments prefer to work through NGOs; as a result, nowadays there are around more than 30 thousand international NGOs and other uncounted local community and grassroots organizations in the world.

As the writers tried to show the notion of 'technology' through 'stove development program' by Intermediate Technology as a case study, they denounced the claim by Marx (1976) and Rostow (2020), who stated technological development as a necessary precondition for social progress and development whereas traditional cultures presented as static and unchanging phenomena.

This idea arises from the assumption that people in all societies should assimilate to the most 'civilized' model, i.e western capitalism. Such constructs have also been expressed in the speech, documents and actions of most development practitioners and theorists. In this case, Bradley (2006) and Oliver de Sardan (2005) boldly indicated the reasons why western hegemony still exists in the world and the need for deconstructing the hegemonic development discourse for the betterment of the development aid industry. Alongside this, it is important to bear in mind that an image of social change solely on western ideas is just a distortion since cultures outside the west themselves have evolved in their own versions long before the age of enlightenment and capitalism.

The writers also tried to show the relationship between 'money and motivation' among local people households. Usually, many development practitioners consider acquisition of cash or material gain as the most important aspect of life. However, this may not always be true and the meaning of cash depended on the social context in which it is exchanged. In this case, the writers witnessed the hegemonic understanding of development practitioners as they conducted their ethnography while they dealt with the case studies of 'fish farming' and 'use of new stoves' among local people. Here, the writers suggested the need to respect cultures and maintain the balance between modern rationality and local realities. In support of this notion, Edelman and Haugerud (2005) claimed that the current global context needs a new 'hybrid' that encompasses culture, history, economy, and institutions.

In their piece about the notion of 'culture as a barrier', the writers showed opposition between tradition and modernity that corresponds to the classificatory division between locals and developers. In this case, the writers witnessed the existence of classificatory divisions by taking the experience of 'fish farming' and 'stove development' experiences respectively by FAO and Intermediate Technology as case studies among local communities. As Arse and Long (2000), Bradley (2006), and Escobar (1997) indicated, the controversy has happened since development discourse was founded on a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges western thought over other cultures. However, the idea of economic rationality that largely rooted from modernization paradigm now shifted to the deconstruction of positivism embodying postmodern realities. As a result, the process development discourse and practices constructed in the context of hegemonic western developers have become increasingly irrelevant in the face of the current global context.

By taking 'partnership' as one of the major issues of development discourse and practice, the book tried to show how partnership is problematic in the relationships among different development actors. Local organizations including local communities for whom western development agents work with are accused of being passive recipient that are unable to manage their own affairs. For instance, donors are accused of imposing their decision through a promise of aid and give little respect to local experts including their respective communities. This shows the existence of a larger gap among development actors in the aid industry in relation to putting promises into practice as the book clearly indicated. In this case, Mosse (2005) and Mosse and Lewis (2005) argued in support of the idea of how policy makers and project managers attributed hegemony to other development actors. Because development agents assumed that they have better understanding of local's need more than the local communities themselves, they jeopardized the intended outcomes in the process.

Moreover, the writers explain the importance of 'expert' including expert allocation, especially whether to use expatriates or nationals which is also problematic in the mainstream development discourse and practice. The writers suggested that trained local experts are preferable to the sustainability of development projects. This is because foreign experts who consume a great deal of money and resources without significant successes cannot be preferable to local experts who are well aware of local contexts and realities. However, having the assumption of Euro-American knowledge superior to locals is counterproductive and let development projects disrupt the pre-existing socio-cultural realities of local communities. Alongside this idea, Norgaard (1994), Oliver de Sardan (2005), and Mosse and Lewis (2005) stated that a number of development actors in the aid industry still believed that western science would necessarily lead to effective social order. Nevertheless, all cultures should be taken as an appropriate behavior of society, and there is the need to maintain the balance between modern rationality and local realities.

Moreover, in their gender related agenda, the writers argued that gender subordination has got insignificant attention even lesser than race and class. The need for strengthening the participation and empowerment of women is also indicated. Women have been striving to find ways for greater control of their lives and to empower themselves. In this case, the book stood on the side of Kebeer's (1994) and Peet's and Hartwick's (2009) explanations that indicated

empowerment as the capacity of individuals to make decisions. Here, participation in decision making is taken as a prerequisite and closely related to empowerment. Even international development organizations like FAO (1987) considered participation as a litmus test for women empowerment. Similarly, Buvinic (1989) and Nussbaum and Glover (1995) claimed that developer's tendency should provide assistance and increase women's income rather than directly challenging the power relation between men and women. Accordingly, alliance between men and women should be created for the benefit of women without costing men counterparts. In this case, the book witnessed Zambia's Luapula women experience that gave them the chance to benefit from a development project without costing their male counterparts.

In line with the major themes addressed in the book, the major strengths of the book include, firstly, holding unique kind of collections since it is not customary to find an ethnographic work on aid industry including its discourse and practice. In this case, scholars like Bradley (2005) have criticized previous ineffective tools and techniques used by development practitioners and recommended to employ ethnographic techniques in a more transparent and inclusive approach to development discourse and practice. In addition, in support of Bradley's idea, Pottier (1993) clearly stated the role and importance of ethnographic techniques in development project appraisal. Secondly, the writers come up with strong and constructive critiques against the mainstream development discourses and practices since they both are academicians and practitioners, and the tool they employed gave them the chance to enrich the book with a great deal of first hand findings and evidence. And thirdly, the book tried to provide balanced ethnographical materials by exploring important issues like gender, culture, technology and other issues. Moreover, the work critically reappraised some policies and practices that can interest practitioners, policy makers, development study theorists, academicians and researchers. The authors should also be applauded for being less polarized, culture/tradition tolerant and their contribution to enriching development and anthropological studies.

On the other hand, this book can be criticized for lack of proper and enough explanation in some parts, especially case studies and related theoretical arguments that were examined in the book are conceptually compromised. Similarly, since the authors have strong attachment with the aid industry, they can be accused of the question of subjectivity. Likewise, Norgaard (1994) and Bradley (2006) indicated the tendency of development practitioners to resist and maintain their

wellbeing in the aid industry. For instance, in their work at some occasions, the writers showed a relatively high degree of sympathy to developers rather to other development aid actors and repeatedly described pressures and challenges faced by developers while they are conducting their activities. In addition, the authors' can be accused of failing to provide observable and desirable resolutions. In this case, the writers themselves witnessed that they did not provide explicit policy recommendations about how the aid industry should be reformed in their concluding remarks.

In general, despite some shortcomings indicated, the book provided a great deal of strong and constructive critiques in how the mainstream development discourses and practices should be improved. In this case, by writing pieces on the performance of development aid, gender as an agenda, the issue of partnership, the notion of cultural barrier, the role of technology and experts, the influence of money and motivation, and other constructive insights, the writers contributed a lot to the creation of knowledge and betterment of the dominant development discourse and practice. More importantly, the writers including other scholars boldly indicated the need to employ ethnographic strategies with a more limpid and comprehensive manner to help the effort of improving the performance of the aid industry.

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