

APPROACHES TO SOCIAL POLICY TRANSFER BY A ‘SUPER PHILANTHROPY’

Examining the Gates Foundation as a health policy supplier in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Philanthropic foundations have emerged as an important group of novel aid donors over the past decade, with new resources and fresh approaches for development. Private philanthropies have been also welcomed to global policy making since the 2011 Busan High Level Forum for Aid Effectiveness, and whilst presenting themselves as technical and non-political actors, philanthropies are increasingly influencing global and domestic social policy directions in the context of development. Yet, although development aid has for long been recognised as a powerful conduit of *policy transfer*, private actors have been largely omitted in policy transfer study.

This paper investigates the case of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – the world’s most powerful philanthropy – as a health donor in Tanzania, Africa’s third biggest aid recipient where nearly half of the aid is directed to the health sector. The paper presents preliminary findings of the research, focusing upon the (i) unique *characteristics* of the philanthropy as a ‘policy supplier’, and (ii) the policy transfer *strategies* at play. The data in question consists of a documentary analysis and elite interviews with representatives of the Gates Foundation, its partner organisations and experts on the health aid landscape in Tanzania.

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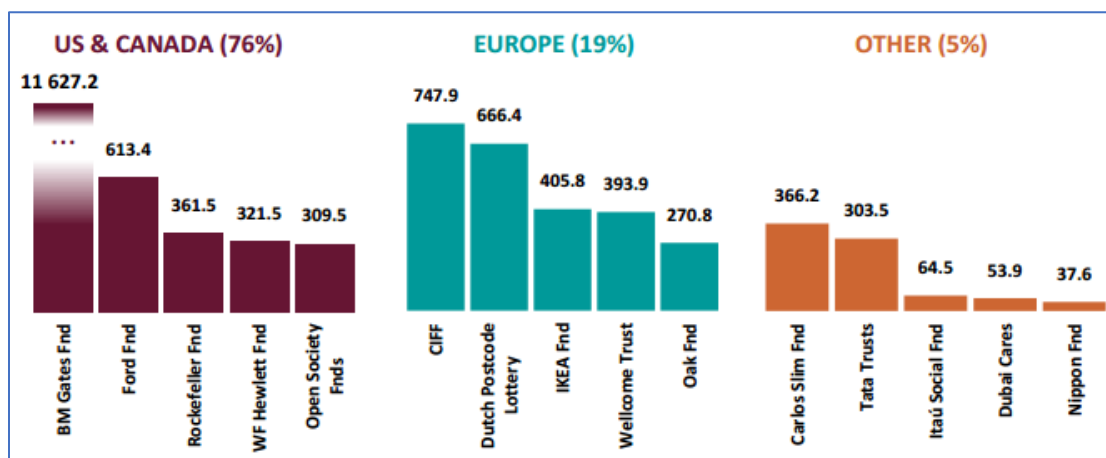
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1. INTRODUCTION

Philanthropic foundations became actors in international development in the early 20th century led by American organisations such as the Carnegie, Rockefeller and Ford (Roelofs, 2003, p. 7-8). However, it is over the past 10-15 years that philanthropic donors have truly arisen as a source of alternative resources and approaches for development. Data shows that the share of philanthropic flows within Official Development Aid flows have increased ten-fold between 2003 and 2013 (OECD, 2015), amounting to up to 19,5 billion (USD) in 2013-15¹. This emergence of private philanthropies as global development actors has been partially spurred by the new generation of philanthropists, amongst which Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Jeff Skoll (E-Bay) and Larry Page (Google) are only a few examples². Simultaneously, the longer standing foundations have adapted to the transformation within the broader philanthropic sector, increasingly emphasising *evidence*, *effectiveness*, and *big bets* for philanthropy that delivers measurable outcomes. However, in the context of development, one organisation stands out; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has become the most influential private philanthropy both in terms of financial investment (as shown in the figure below) and development approaches, as this paper will illustrate.

Figure 1. Largest philanthropic aid donors 2013-15, USD million (see footnote 1)



The increasing involvement of new philanthropic donors in development aid, in addition to the rising Southern donors³, is challenging the global aid regime (Greenhill et al., 2013). Global social policy agendas

¹<http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/Preliminary-results-philanthropy-survey.pdf>; see also the report prepared for the conference (Dervis et al., 2011, Chapter 3).

² Including actors such as Tony Elumelu (Nigerian bank mogul) or Patrice Motsepe (South-African mine entrepreneur) paving the way for African philanthropic aid with a business approach (Moyo, 2011).

³ Often referred to as the non-OECD/DAC donors, such as China, India Brazil, South Africa or Turkey.

have been previously dominated by traditional aid donors, commonly understood as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD-DAC⁴ and some International NGOs, such as Oxfam. The emergence of private philanthropies as key development actors marks a particularly interesting rupture in the Sub-Saharan African context, where traditional donors have directed domestic policy priorities to a large extent for the past five decades (Chin and Quadir, 2012, p. 496).

Yet, little is known about the mechanisms through which private foundations shape global social policy directions, and their policy influence in aid-receiving countries of Africa remains analytically un-addressed (see Hayman, 2015, p. 159). The existing theoretical frameworks of *policy transfer* offer relevant tools for such analysis. Policy transfer is most commonly defined by the classic interpretation of Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), as a “*process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting*” (2000, p. 5). This definition helpfully includes policies and institutions but also *ideas* that travel between *political settings* and not just states, allowing the investigation of various transnational processes and ‘policy suppliers’.

It is against this background that this paper investigates the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as a prevailing global social policy ‘supplier’ both within the aid community and aid-receiving countries. The paper draws from a qualitative study conducted during Spring 2017 on the Gates Foundation as a health donor in Tanzania, where nearly half of the overall received aid is directed to the health sector⁵. The study does *not* seek to establish causal mechanisms *nor* investigate processes of actual policy adoption, but it presents a preliminary analysis of the : (1) the *distinctive characteristics* of philanthropic foundations as policy suppliers and, (2) the *policy transfer strategies* utilised by private philanthropies. By doing so, the paper engages with the existing global social policy and policy transfer literature, in order to provide new insights on the global social policy making processes involving powerful non-state actors. The data consists of thematically analysed in-depth interviews with (a) representatives of the *Gates Foundation*, (b) representatives from *partner/implementation organisations*, and (c) experts on Tanzanian donor activities in the health sector and government donor policies from *civil society and international organisations*.

The paper will start by discussing the emergence of non-state actors within the global policy sphere and provide a brief overview of the Gates Foundation’s role within it. Second, it will examine the characteristics – unique advantages and limitations – of private philanthropies as policy suppliers based upon the existing literature and collected data. This will be followed by an analysis of the diverse policy transfer strategies utilised by the Gates Foundation with references to the existing policy transfer and diffusion frameworks. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the ways in which the global is connected to policy transfer processes taking place between the Gates Foundation and aid-receiving countries.

⁴ OECD: “(DAC) is one of the key forums in which the major bilateral donors work together to increase the effectiveness of their common efforts to support sustainable development”, see <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=608>

⁵ OECD/WB, see <http://www.aidflows.org/>

2. BACKGROUND: PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIES IN GLOBAL SOCIAL POLICY PROCESSES

Philanthropic foundations have become prominent emerging social policy actors in their own right, alongside states and International Organisations. Yet, whilst this has been vastly acknowledged in the most recent global social policy scholarly (eg. Alcock et al., 2016, p. 515; Artaraz and Hill, 2016, p. 14; Herrmann, 2009, p. 279; Kaasch, 2015; Yeates, 2014, p. 8), empirical analyses of their investment models, impact or engagement in and with the donor community and aid-receiving countries remain quasi-absent. This section will briefly discuss the emergence of private philanthropies in the global social policy making sphere and introduce the Gates Foundation as the world's most influential philanthropic donor.

2.1 Global Governance – complex multilateralism welcoming private actors

The involvement of private philanthropies in global policy processes is related to the very nature of global governance and the aid system itself. Lacking centralised authority, welcoming new resources for aid, experiencing an ongoing turn-over of national officials and being open to new influences, this system is “fluid” and full of policy windows for new policy entrepreneurs to engage in (Stone and Ladi, 2015). Thus, global social policy, as a practice, represents *complex multilateralism* (O'Brien et al., 2000), in which a potpourri of actors, including international NGOs, religious movements, multinational corporations, and other policy entrepreneurs engage in various axis. Thus, the existing processes of global social policy making are multiple, ranging from *international*, as those between international organisations and nation-states and *supranational*, as the sovereign policy-making above individual states to *transnational*, manifesting in beside and below relations between states, NGOs, think-tanks and other actors (Tag, 2013, p. 25). It is particularly the transnational processes in which non-state actors as philanthropies excel, but as explained in what follows, their participation is equally present in supranational policy-making platforms.

Yet, one must recognise that it is not solely the natural permissiveness of the global social policy system that has allowed for the increasing role of philanthropic actors in the making and not only the delivery of global social policies. In Global health, as in other sectors, global policy agendas have previously been driven by industrialised countries and multilateral organisations. Such agendas have been questioned for the resulted welfare outcomes as well as the utilised aid modalities⁶ by academia, civil society as well as aid-receiving countries. At the same time the Global Aid regime has been internally shaken by the 2008/9 financial crisis and the rise of right-wing politics within several donor states. Consequently, the global aid community has become increasingly open to increasing the menu of development approaches and resources.

It is within this context that philanthropic foundations have gained terrain as prominent development actors, a role furthered by the transformation of the philanthropic sector. Contemporary philanthropic

⁶ Criticism has been directed particularly towards the *Washington Consensus*, leading neoliberal ideological framework for development throughout the 1980-90's. This led to the erosion of public health care systems across aid-receiving countries due to privatisation and under-funding, which materialised through coercive aid conditionalities (eg. Harman, 2009; Laurell and Arellano, 1996). The following *Post-Washington Consensus*, on the other hand, is seen to have led to an overwhelming interest in *Social Protection* in the 2000's (Lewis, 2013, p. 75), with a narrow focus on the extremely poor provided for on temporary basis by donor-led schemes (see Adesina, 2011; Del Ninno et al., 2015 p. 3).

aid is more systematic, sophisticated and engaged than ever. Whilst the early, mainly American, philanthropic foundations acted on a short term basis and largely independently from global policy making (Roelofs, 2003, p. 7-8), private philanthropies of today do not shy away from ‘big bets’⁷ and global policy platforms. In fact, they have built a reputation as providers of not only new funds, but also quick, innovative and technical solutions to development issues with efficient business-minded management and private sector engaging strategy. The model, furthered particularly by the new philanthropies emerging from world-leading technology companies, has been labelled as the *Silicon Valley or California Consensus* (Morvaridi, 2015, p. 5, Moran, 2014).

Moran (2014) has highlighted the implications of the California Consensus as the prevailing model and driving force of contemporary philanthropy, as *“these ideas have begun to diffuse widely throughout the international development architecture and across organs of global governance.”* (2014, p. 27). Such influence has been visible especially since the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness led by OECD-DAC in 2011, when the global aid community has welcomed philanthropic foundations not only as new sources of resources, but also policy ideas. The Busan Forum brought together, for the first time, a whole range of donors including South-South co-operators, civil society organisations and private foundations to an agreed development cooperation framework⁸. Since, the UN plenaries have welcomed private philanthropies in developing approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a process that was previously exclusive to state-actors and international organisations (Morvaridi, 2016, p. 157). The Post-2015 Development Agenda report by the High Level Panel (HLP) illustrates this deliberate shift by highlighting that *“the fight against poverty requires a ‘new global partnership’”,* including philanthropic actors:

“A new global partnership should engage national governments of all countries, local authorities, international organisations, businesses, civil society, foundations and other philanthropists, and people (...). It should move beyond the MDGs’ orientation of state-to-state partnerships between high-income and low-income governments to be inclusive of more players” (UN, 2013, p. 10).

2.2 The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – prominent health donors

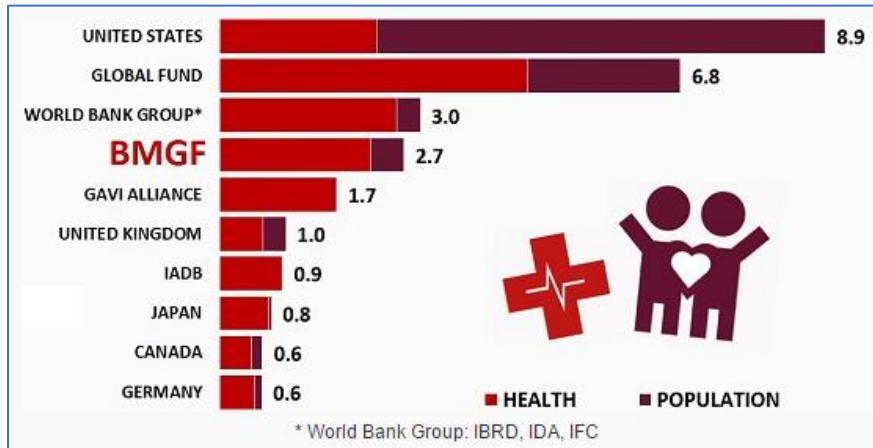
A key among the variety of philanthropic actors is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, arguably the single most influential private actor. McCoy et al. (2009), amongst others, has stressed that *“(…), the entry of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation into the global health landscape (...) has taken private, philanthropic funding for international development, especially for health, to new and unprecedented heights.”* (2009, p. 410). Indeed, the Gates-Foundation has paved the way for philanthropic involvement in Global Health – its top priority (Bishop and Green, 2010, p. 61). With endowments of around 40 billion USD within the Gates Trust⁹ and over USD 11.6 billion of allocated funds over 2013-15, the Gates Foundation is one of the most important health donors globally (see BMGF in figure 2 below).

⁷ A term utilised in reference to large donations (of 10 million USD or more, for instance) aimed at social change, driven by the ideals of ‘effective altruism’, such as evidence-based investments and measurable impact (see eg. <https://www.effectivealtruism.org/>).

⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/fourthhighlevelforumonaideffectiveness.htm>

⁹ Gates Foundation, see <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Who-We-Are/General-Information/Foundation-Factsheet>

Figure 2. Top 10 donors in the health and population/reproductive health sectors (2015, USD billion)¹⁰



The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation truly started to thrive in 2006, when it gained its financial security in the form of a long-term donation by the investor-billionaire Warren Buffet and established its core programmes, *Global Health*, *Global Development* and *US*, later complemented by *Global Policy and Advocacy*. Since, it has become to represent the key characteristics of new philanthropic aid in all fronts; it implements (i) technical quick impact development solutions (eg. vaccine development and delivery), (ii) new aid delivery tools (eg. loans and equity investments in addition to grants; Salamon, 2014b), (iii) new partnerships (eg. global Public-Private-Partnerships, PPPs), and (iv) new emphasis on private sector (involvement as active and engaged innovators for development issues as opposed to providers replacing the public sector). As stressed in an article by the Chief Strategy Officer & President of the Gates Foundation,

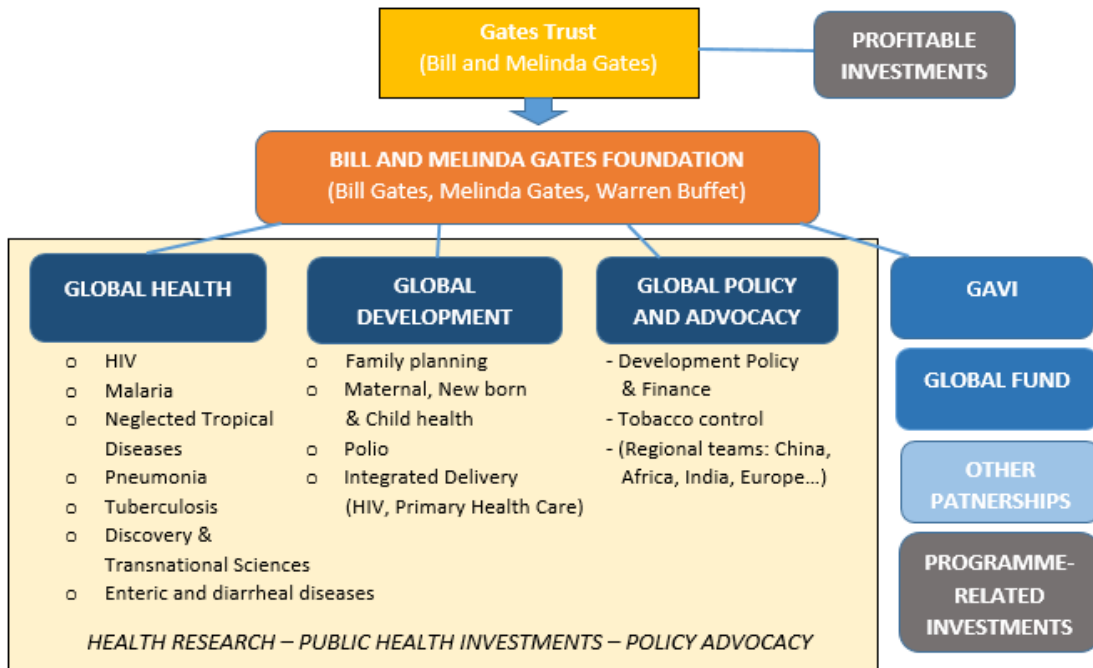
“Development has only begun to tap the innovation, expertise and resources available in the private sector. (...) private sector partners can lend significant strength to efforts to tackle the urgent issues addressed by the post-2015 development agenda.” (Mark Suzman, 2015, p. 97)

The interest in private sector engagement is also visible in the Foundation’s efforts to further global Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) for a new type of development cooperation. Example can be drawn from GAVI, also known as the Vaccine Alliance, brought to life in 2000 by the Gates Foundation’s initial 750 million USD commitment. The Foundation has also vastly supported the Global Fund, which focuses upon the elimination of AIDS/HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. These organisations act as implementers of the techno-scientific aid model promoted by the *California Consensus*, not only materialising it but setting it as a rivalling model to the more political approach typically promoted by the World Health Organisation, for instance (Barnes and Brown, 2011; Gartner and Kharas, 2013)¹¹. Moreover, the Gates Trust – allocating the resources to the Foundation – has several investments in the pharmaceutical industry, also broadening the Gates couple’s interest in health to financial gain (see eg. Curtis, 2016). Thus, the engagement of the Gates Foundation within Global Health is multifaceted, as illustrated in the figure below.

¹⁰ Source: DAC statistics, see <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/beyond-oda-foundations.htm>

¹¹ Simultaneously, the Gates Foundation has become the single largest donor to the WHO, providing over 10 % of its yearly budget; see http://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/reports/A69_INF3-en.pdf?ua=1

Figure 3. Gates Foundation’s engagement in Global Health



Whilst emphasising technical, evidence-based approaches, the Foundation has worked its way to become one of world’s most influential global policy actors (Birn, 2014; Moran and Stevenson, 2013; Youde, 2013). It has done so with the ability to shape global health interventions (eg. focus on vaccines), aid modalities (eg. vertical funds), donor collaboration (eg. engagement with big pharma) and sources of aid (eg. growing philanthropic flows¹²). The philanthropy is thus deeply vested into global policy making platforms and processes. For instance, by pledging 10 million USD for vaccines in 2010 in Davos, the Gates couple initiated the *Global Vaccine Action Plan*. More recently, Bill Gates called for the establishment of a global health institution inspired by NATO to respond to global health epidemics, such as Ebola, in a coordinated manner (Gates, 2015). The personal advocacy work of the Gates couple is supported by a strong arsenal within the Foundation itself, as the Policy Advocacy -programme is dedicated to the dissemination of the Foundation’s policy visions on a global scale – including a London Office focusing on bilateral donor engagement.

¹² Having a specific wing focusing on philanthropic relations within the Foundation and establishing initiatives such as *the Giving Pledge* (see <https://givingpledge.org/>), the philanthropy has pushed for commitment to greater giving amongst the world’s wealthiest.

3. PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS AS GLOBAL SOCIAL POLICY SUPPLIERS

Aid-receiving countries are particularly impacted by external policy actors, as development aid continues to represent a powerful conduit for the spread of social policies within such contexts. The policy transfer literature focusing on the context of development has redirected the analytical attention from states to a broader range of ‘suppliers’ (donors) and ‘adopters’ (aid-receiving countries), with a particular focus on international organisations (see Appuhami et al., 2011). This section will contribute to this body of literature by examining the distinctive characteristics of philanthropic foundations as ‘policy suppliers’.

3.1 Unique advantages of philanthropic development actors

Private philanthropies do not benefit only from being new exiting sources of development resources in having an influence over global social policy directions, but they also have several advantages connected to the very nature of private philanthropy. Firstly, whilst being generally considered as part of civil society organisations (Stone, 2010, p. 6), philanthropies differ from most NGOs and charities by being self-funded, not having volunteers, nor being accountable to a member-base, which provides them with considerable financial and operational autonomy (Roelofs, 2003, p. 18). What is more, private philanthropies have prominent power to both expand and transform civil society by acting as a major provider of funds. In fact, several academics have pointed to the ways in which philanthropies have furthered a shift from holistic and policy-focused approaches to market-based and problem-oriented ones, notably amongst local NGOs (eg. Edwards, 2011; Hayman, 2015; Morvaridi, 2012, p. 1192). Stubbs (2005) has utilised the term ‘meta-NGO’ to represent organisations, such as of philanthropic foundations, which not only assist, but govern other civil society organisations (see also Bach & Stark, 2001, p. 15 in Stubbs 2005, p. 81) .

Others have considered philanthropic foundations as private sector actors, due to the business-like ways in which they search for actors and products to invest in, develop investment infrastructure and seek for the biggest, measurable investment impact possible – occasionally combined with profit-making (Anheier, 2006, p. 233, Schervish, 2014). In addition to new approaches, contemporary philanthropies have also championed public-private-partnerships, boosting private sector involvement in development efforts through their knowledge of private sector needs and public sector markets. (Bishop and Green, 2009, Birn, 2014; Ulbert and Hamm, 2011)¹³. Thus, philanthropies originating from world-leading businesses have the unique advantage of an in-depth market knowledge combined with financial independence, as foundations are not liable to shareholders for profits. Philanthropic foundations also benefit from political independence unlike states or International Organisations. By avoiding time-consuming democratic processes (such as elections or complex systems of legislation) and accountability to an electorate or to member-states, philanthropic donors are provided with an unusual freedom and flexibility as to how to allocate resources. These advantages were crystallised by a representative of the Foundation:

“One [...], that sort of objectivity - lacking the profit motive, lack of political agendas in order to improve the health of people around the world. The second is this ability to bridge the public and private sector and the understanding we have both worlds in order to are try and create solutions

¹³ This has generated a variety of terms within the literature on private foundations, such as *venture philanthropy* (Letts, et al., 1997), *entrepreneurial philanthropy* (Harvey et al. 2011), *big philanthropy* (Barkan, 2013), *capitalist philanthropy* (Morvaridi, 2012) and *philanthrocapitalism* (Bishop and Green, 2009).

that work for both. The third is, I guess we call it a patient risk capital. So in part because we are not for profit, we don't have to hit quarterly profit targets and ultimately we are beholden to Bill and Melinda because it is their money.” [G3]

Beside the organisational characteristics, particularly new philanthropic foundations established by celebrities of various kinds can convey a considerable public support for their causes and approaches of interest. As demonstrated by Bono in the 1980's, famous philanthropists enjoy a great deal of visibility and are often portrayed in the media as the 'cool' do-gooders. Also known as *celanthropy*¹⁴, branding and 'celebrity status' comes with great deal of access to various platforms, networks and people. Such social capital held by Bill and Melinda Gates was particularly recognised within the Foundation, and the co-chairs' 'voice' was amongst the appreciated advantages of the Foundation by interviewees.

“For our variety of reasons, well deserved reasons, both Bill and Melinda have a profile and ability to connect people in various ways. We think carefully about how to leveraged that.” [G3]

“We talked a lot about the voice of Bill and Melinda Gates and their ability to rally support around the topic, just by their involvement. It is also pretty huge.” [G4]

The celebrity philanthropist -status is related to the positive public image philanthropic foundations enjoy more broadly. Nickel and Eikenberry (2010) stress that while *governmental social policy* is politicized, contested and held accountable, *philanthropic social policy* remains considered by society at large as a distant, private and apolitical act of good-will. In fact, the sheer semantics of philanthropy, 'love for human kid', proclaims an ideology that protects philanthropic foundations from public criticism and debate (l'Anson & Pfeifer, 2013 in Jung and Harrow, 2015, p. 2). These characteristics combined, philanthropic donors challenge bilateral donors as well as international organisations, such as the UN institutions or the World Health Organisation. Approaching development issues from a technical, non-political perspective with large resources for innovative solutions constitute an important set of assets that challenge the 'business as usual' – conditional aid modalities and bureaucratic processes. This is particularly important in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa – generally conceptualised as a region of weak states characterised by institutionalised corruption and clientelism (eg. Van de Walle, 2001) and therefore particularly targeted for 'good governance' and 'democratisation' by donors (Alou, 2009; Bebbington et al., 2008; Tar, 2014). As such, private philanthropies have gained an important foothold within the aid system, being respectable and welcomed alternative policy 'suppliers'.

“[...] we are generally very careful to be seen and to actually be independent, not aligned. [...] Consequently, it's easier for various organisations - including national and global organisations - to see us as a neutral broker, a facilitator bringing other groups together, negotiating changes [...]. We do have that position to great extent, more so than any of the government organisations, many of the for-profit that might be engaged in global health...we have credibility in terms of being neutral.” [G2]

3.2 Key limitations of philanthropic foundations as 'policy suppliers'

Whilst the above discussion shed light on the unique advantages philanthropies have in terms of influence as well as new technical expertise and financial resources in the case of the Gates Foundation,

¹⁴ Described by Rojek (2014) as “charity projects fronted and, in the public mind, defined by celebrities” (2014, p. 127).

philanthropies equally experience limitations on several fronts. Ficher and Standberg-Larsen (2016) have examined the power relations between the donors and the government in Tanzania, and furthered that donor policy influence is driven by three factors: *financial resources*, *technical expertise* and *influential position* (2016), all of which remain limited for private philanthropies. For instance, regardless of the advantages the non-state, non-business status of philanthropic organisations brings about, it remains a double-edged sword in instigating policy transfer. On the one hand, philanthropic foundations can claim political independence from potentially controversial donor states and institutions and highlight the voluntary nature of their engagement in policy solutions for development (Stone, 2010, p. 9), which increases their influence as discussed above. On the other hand, philanthropies lack political authority, cannot claim a deep connection to the grassroots unlike various NGOs, and remain private actors whose work is driven by the philanthropists and their individual preferences as opposed to consensual agenda-setting with different stakeholders.

Consequently, private philanthropies need to systematically justify their legitimacy as development actors, and often seek collaboration with other established donors (Stone, 2010), as discussed further in the following section. This dependency is illustrated in the ways in which the Gates Foundation adopts global policy goals, as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, into its strategies or seeks support for its initiatives from other key actors. Dependency on the support of the aid community is also financial. Whilst the resource independence allows philanthropies to make ‘catalytic’ investments in under-explored areas, instruments and tools, their funds are insufficient for – and not directed to – scaling up. As philanthropic actors have become increasingly interested in sustainability and large-scale uptake, this requires the financial resources and political will among other donors as well as governments.

*“(...) we are a funding organisation and can’t do all the direct activity ourselves so we need to find partners can work with us to achieve those goals so what we do is public-private partnerships to align our goals with theirs. [...] **They provide you some kind of leverage?** Yes, it is all about leverage, it is all about how you work with others to maximise the impact you are having. So leverage is very important, leverage for different things; leverage for organising the development of new products, leverage for funding, leverage for the delivery system.” [G5]*

From the recipient country perspective, such ‘catalytic’ use of resources and light-weight presence in comparison to other key actors can also lead to unstable donor-relationships. By funding short-term projects and innovative technical ‘fixes’ instead of partaking in pooled budget funding mechanisms philanthropies lose access to key domestic policy platforms. As a couple of the donor activity experts acknowledged, maintaining relationships without country presence and strategy can also be perceived as a lack of commitment within the aid-receiving governments.

Moreover, such characteristics (development investments defined by individuals, lack of democratic policy processes, catalytic projects) raise broader questions of accountability, alignment and effectiveness. Project funding can be seen as a patchwork approach that creates a management burden for the aid-receiving countries instead of contributing towards systems strengthening, whilst having no guarantees of long term commitment¹⁵. In fact, several interviewees reported even on duplication of

¹⁵ Example can be drawn from a swiftly ended Gates-founded large-scale school project in the US, considered by the Foundation to have no “*path to having big impact*” (Riley, 2011).

efforts between the Foundation's different programmatic areas operating in Tanzania. When the projects are designed without the input of the stakeholders from the contexts of operationalisation, also accountability to local populations, harmonisation with other donors and alignment with domestic policy preferences have been criticised to be compromised (eg. Birn, 2014, p. 2; Edwards, 2015, p. 39; Hesselmann, 2011, p. 236; Youde, 2013). It is within this context where private philanthropies act as plutocratic social policy makers (Reich, 2013), that Horvath and Powell (2016) have labelled philanthrocapitalism as *disruptive philanthropy*, referring to

“activity that through the magnitude of donations either explicitly or by consequence alters the public conversation about which social issues matter, sets an agenda for how they matter, and specifies who is the preferred provider of services to address these issues without any engagement with the deliberative processes of civil society [read society]” (2016, p. 4, precision added).

Finally, although the positive 'philanthropy image' allows private foundations to avoid some of the public critique, academia and civil society organisations have questioned the 'voluntary' nature of philanthropic giving. This is an ever more critical issue in the context of contemporary foundations engaging simultaneously in profit-making and philanthropic giving. For instance, the Gates Foundation has been criticised for collaboration with and providing funding for multinational corporations for development purposes, whilst the Gates Trust has held shares in the same companies (see eg. Curtis, 2016; McGoey, 2015). Benefitting from the unequal global market system is seen as one of the reasons for which philanthropies have focused on *social goods* instead of *social change* (Edwards, 2011). They are consequently seen to shy away from the political questions of social justice¹⁶ without addressing the overall issues of inequality leading to poor health and other problems of welfare (Moyo, 2011; Eisenberg and Palmer, 2005). In order to address the diverse critiques of legitimacy, foundations require not only the support of other actors but also scientific justifications as a proof of objectivity, altruistic interests and effective approaches.

“Now I often look at that thing of influence, and people say that ‘you have influence, they have too much influence’. And mind you, we do try to assemble the best evidence, the best social science and the best science around this problem. We spend a huge amount of time and money actually in convening experts. So if people think we are wrong I am most interested to hear that, or that we didn't have the view of the important scientist or social scientist, I am the most open to hearing that.” [G1]

¹⁶ Although an emergence of 'Social Justice Philanthropy' has been widely recognised, this is driven predominantly by foundations that are younger, smaller and/or incorporated as public foundations (Suárez, 2012).

4. THE DISTINCTIVE STRATEGIES USED BY THE GATES FOR SOCIAL POLICY TRANSFER

The study of policy transfer processes has largely focused upon the transfer of *hard policies*, comprising policy instruments (eg. regulations), institutions (eg. tax systems) and policies (eg. activation policies) – between countries (Stone, 2004). In the context aid-receiving countries, this has been associated with vertical coercion by traditional aid donors utilising aid conditionalities as a key mechanism (Gilardi, 2012; Jung and Harrow, 2015; Rodgers, 2014). However, according to Stone (2012, 2010) foundations presenting themselves as ‘non-policy interfering’, cannot utilise political aid conditionalities to further adoption of hard policies (2012, p. 495, 2010). This section will examine the ways in which the Gates Foundation engages in policy-transfer instigation.

4.1 Soft policy transfer – legitimacy through science, dissemination through networks

“Foundations induce consent by creating an ideology that appears to be common sense and incorporates all newly emergent or challenging trends. They also institute reforms against the resistance, indifference, or incapacity of political institutions. In addition, they integrate into their networks persons who are ambitious, or who threaten to lead counterhegemonic movements.” (Roelofs, 2003, pp. 198–199).

As the above quote highlights, ideological influence and strategic networking are presented as key channels of policy influence for private philanthropies. The existing literature on the role of non-state actors in policy transfer processes, particularly driven by works by Stone (2012, 2010, 2004, 2003), suggests that private actors are particularly prone to engage in *soft policy transfer*, which can be understood as the creation and dissemination of ideas, knowledge, values and ideology¹⁷. In order to do so, private donors have largely relied on (natural) science as the basis of their philanthropic work (Edwards, 2011), taking advantage of knowledge creation and dissemination not only to define policy goals and instruments, but also to spread their development approach and overarching ideology amongst other development actors through their networks. Such an emphasis of strategic use of ‘scientific knowledge’, ‘evidence’ and ‘data’ in disseminating specific approaches or furthering the Gates Foundation’s legitimacy was strongly present in the interviews:

“We collect as much data as we can, on the reality of the epidemic. We provide ourselves – and partners - with quite extensive information about how bad the epidemic is, what underlies the failures etc. (...). The other thing we do a lot is we do pilot-studies to validate the specific approach and its impact on the epidemic. [...] we would use the diagnostic tool in a pilot study in a specific country to persuade the authorities in that country that this is going to work, its going to have impact, and its cost-effective, as they adopt the design to the policy or their approaches.” [G2]

“[...] we also fund research that works in the direction that we think is important, we can also do our own presentations and publications about what we think the state of the world is.” [G5]

¹⁷ The concept of *soft policies*, as distinguished from *hard policies* by Stone (2004), also relates to the distinction of *principles* (policy guidelines or templates) from *models* (concrete policies) by Weyland (2006), and echoes, to some extent, the famous concept of *policy paradigm* (framework of ideas defining policy issues, goals and the instruments for achieving them) by Hall (1993, p. 279).

As the above quotes pinpoint, the Gates Foundation has largely invested in funding scientific publications – to the extent of being criticised for generating publication bias in global health¹⁸. It equally provides resources for (mainly Western) universities, think tanks, research institutions and the pharmaceutical industry, as the recent pledge worth 279 million USD to the Institute of Health Metrics¹⁹ (IHME) showcases. Furthermore, engaging in diverse networks, as the epistemic communities embedded within the scientific world, has been pointed to be another vital strategy for non-state actors to gain legitimacy, status, access to high-table conversations and platforms to further problem definitions and approaches (Stone, 2012, p. 495, 2010, p. 9).

Collaboration and co-investment with other donors in order to demonstrate and further its preferred interventions arose as a key theme in the interviewees with the Gates Foundation representatives. This network as a policy transfer mechanism was seen to be facilitated by the Foundation's employees – stressed as a great asset to the Foundation – as they often held previous positions at other key aid organisations. Whilst seeking to maintain a certain distance from traditional donors in order to maintain the advantageous status of an 'independent actor', these were introduced through more subtle approaches, such as external expert boards assessing the funded projects. When asked how does the Foundation seek to influence the donor community, an established strategy, the Foundation's advocacy teams and various types of partnerships were systematically mentioned:

"[...] we have a formal engagement through boards and policy establishment with our advocacy team [...]." [G5]

"We obviously have our own advocacy and communications teams and they are really good at what they do." [G10]

Influencing key global actors has also been facilitated by the Gates 'power couple', present and visible in multiple advocacy platforms, such as the H8²⁰ and G8²¹. In addition to being strongly visible in global policy platforms, both Bill and Melinda are equally active in engaging directly with heads of donor and aid-receiving states. Curiously, within the context of Tanzania, the occasional direct high-level interaction between the Gates co-chairs and government leaders was coupled with low visibility at the operational level and strategic use of its granted partners as policy advocates. Whilst implementing organisations can be seen as passive in terms of policy influence (eg. Fischer and Strandberg-Larsen, 2016), close collaboration with government allows to spread problem-definitions and solutions in a powerful round-about way. For instance, the Foundation utilises of a country consultant – an externally contracted and highly respected expert within the country²² - who can convey ideas from a particularly powerful position. Additionally, as told by one partner organisation representative, the Gates Foundation does not seek to flagship its name on advocacy initiatives which is helpful as it allows for the message to be presented to

¹⁸ See eg. <http://robertfortner.posthaven.com/why-you-might-think-like-bill-gates-about-global-health>

¹⁹ <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/science/historic-gift-gates-foundation-gives-279-million-to-university-of-washington/>

²⁰ "The Health 8 (H8) is an informal group of eight health-related organizations comprising WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, GFATM, GAVI, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the World Bank.." WHO, see http://www.searo.who.int/entity/partnerships/topics/donors_ghp_h8/en/

²¹ The Gates Foundation has partaken in the agenda-setting for health for the self-appointed G8 states (Curtis, 2016, p. 10).

²² As well as other African countries without offices according to an interviewee.

the governments as driven by fellow-Tanzanians. This echoes the arguments furthered by several academics pointing to the ways in which Western donors have strategically utilised NGOs. According to Adesina (2014), for instance, the introduction of local NGOs into the donor-driven social policy making was a way of legitimising donor interventions as demanded and advocated by the locals (2014, p. 4). When asked about the strategies of policy influence, a Foundation representative stressed

“One, we work through grantees, we work through our partners. And our partners all have capacity to be the best advocates for the issues that they work on - whether those are small NGOs or being big multinational organisations (...). they are generally in the best position to tell their own stories and explain why it makes sense to invest in certain issues and why make sense to skill up to programs and tell the story of what works.” [G10]

In Tanzania, utilising local actors as policy advocates appeared to be a key form of policy influence not only towards the government but also other donors. Indeed, the Foundation’s activities were also associated with considerable secrecy within the donor community. Not providing General Budget Support or belonging to the development partners’ health group but working through other actors, the Foundation’s activities remained largely unknown. Whilst the reasons for a low-profile donor-engagement remain unclear (some interviewees stressing the Foundation’s poor country-level organisation), this was also seen to provide a backdoor to influence policy priorities of other donors. Example can be drawn from the way in which the Foundation sought to draw in other donors to support its e-health strategy.

“(...) then the Ministry of Health convenes a meeting to show us the road map on the E-health strategy, how to finance it – because Bill Gates never does that, financing. So that’s when the donors come in, when the government convenes the meeting, and say, ‘we now have a strategy and it is 70 million dollars’. That’s when I see these beautiful slides and I know that it comes from somewhere.” [E1]

Additionally, simply investing in specific interventions directs attention and human resources to the concerned areas, contributing towards the recognition of the suggested development solution. Philanthropic donors have become thus key builders of hegemonic development approaches through soft policy transfer, as they *“induce consent by creating an ideology that appears to be common sense and incorporates all newly emergent or challenging trends”* (Roelofs, 2003, p. 188). The sociological Constructivist school has provided valuable theoretical perspectives on the role of hegemony in policy transfer²³, by explaining the global spread of policies through their social *construction* as dominant and the consequent promotion through international norms. Thus, the hegemonic power of ideologies and policy ideas – rationalised through well-developed scientific justifications and promoted by dominant actors – is a particularly powerful channel of policy transfer as it shapes policy-makers’ problem definitions and solution seeking. (Dobbin et al., 2007, 451-456).

²³ While the theory of ‘soft power’ by Nye (1990) has not, to my knowledge, been discussed in the policy transfer literature, it provides interesting insights to the use of soft power in international relations since the importance of military power has declined in the west from the 1990’s onwards. Nye (2006) posits that *“power is the ability to alter the behaviour of others to get what you want. There are basically three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots) and attraction (soft power)”* (2006).

4.2 Rethinking hard policy transfer: policy transfer in Tanzania

In the African context, hard policy transfer is associated not only with hard policies, but also hard transfer mechanisms. The most cited example of coercive policy transfer through aid is undoubtedly that of *Structural Adjustment Programmes* (SAPs), a form of conditional lending introduced by the WB, IMF and the United States Treasury in the 1980's. In the 1990's, SAPs were replaced by *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers* (PRSPs). Although this move was coupled with a shift from conditional lending to budget support, the new 'disbursement conditions' and 'eligibility criteria' are argued to have only masked new forms of political conditionalities related to aid (Booth, 2011, p. 13; see also Swedlund, 2013; Zack-williams and Mohan, 2005). When one looks at the activities of the Gates Foundation, some new perspectives to hard policy are opened. Firstly, although the Gates Foundation has no political (and limited economic) power over the countries it invests in, it seeks to systematically create policy tools, packages and instruments to be scaled up. For instance, the Foundation currently collaborates with the African Development Bank to create a development financing 'policy toolkit' for African countries²⁴. This theme was also frequently mentioned by the interviewees, and therefore the Gates Foundation must also be recognised as a hard policy supplier

"[...] evidence-based decision-making is the best way to define what is really the best minimum package of services that you need to implement, how much it will cost, and who will implement that, and how of the poor going to be catered for et cetera et cetera." [G6]

"We are really trying to avoid that and also show other donors and implementing organisations how they could take these learning and apply them in the context of their work. So that we would end up with some sort of a (...) toolbox that could then be applied in different contexts as a public good." [G11]

However, transfer of such *hard policies* is not necessarily to be led through direct aid conditionalities, but co-creation and engagement with other organisations. As highlighted by the above quotes, evidence was seen as a key strategy to promote such policies and settle potentially conflicting policy visions between the Foundation and aid receiving countries. Consequently, it appears that the Gates Foundation is engaging in hard policy transfer by, at least in part, soft transfer mechanisms of knowledge dissemination and networking, on a horizontal rather than a vertical axis.

Moreover, when looking at the *hard mechanisms* of coercive policy transfer, certain strategies can equally be recognised within the Gates Foundation's approach. Lal (2001), has classified coercive policy transfer mechanisms into five different categories, to which one ought to add 'aid suspension' (eg. Portela, 2007), occurring in instances of undesired political conduct:

1. 'inducement', *"getting governments to enact policies they would otherwise not have initiated"*;
2. 'selectivity', *"aid given only to those (...) exhibiting a 'good' policy environment"*;
3. 'paternalism', *"attempt to get aid spent on the goods and services that they favour"*;
4. 'restraint', *"seeking protection against policy reversal that may occur with a new government"*, and
5. 'signalling', *"aid is used as a device to signal 'good' policy behaviour by the recipient country"* (2001, p. 253-256 in Stone, 2004, p. 554).

²⁴ For more information, see <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do/Global-Policy/Development-Policy-Finance>

Indeed, the Gates Foundation has a clear strategy for country selection, which echoes with the ‘selectivity’ mechanism. The conducted interviews highlighted not only the burden of disease which appears to dominate the official discourse, but equally, previously existing relationships within the preselected countries of focus (India, Nigeria and Ethiopia) as well as the potential for ‘breakthroughs’ within countries. Strategically selecting countries in which a reachable health goal and conducive policy environment meet allows the Foundation to attract further justification for its position as a policy supplier. However, from the perspective of the aid-receiving countries, this means a level of selectivity partially based on the existing policy priorities and leadership – which resonates with several strategies of coercive policy transfer laid out by Lal.

“I would say the third criteria that we start to look at is what we think is our real opportunity for impact and that gets mitigated by a couple different things. Some are questions of how strong do we think the leadership is in those countries or in the areas...[...]. what’s the leadership like, do we think that the problems in that country map to some of the tools that we have.” [G3]

“Those three priority sub-regions include [x] - to demonstrate what can already be done in the African continent in areas of relatively low transmission compared to the rest of the continent, and also in [y] – where the technical feasibility is such that it represents the low hanging fruit.” [G9]

Moreover, the Foundation’s aid modality of choice is project funding through partner organisations, and governments are rarely provided with direct funding. Non-pooled funding for vertical programmes inherently comes with donor power over what is funded and how the resources are utilised (Dreher et al., 2013, p. 408). This diverts ownership from the governments to the donors, and appears contradictory to the repeated theme of *sustainability*, referring to government commitment to and up-scale of the implemented projects. Thus, this discussion points to two distinctive features of policy transfer in the case of the Gates Foundation. Firstly, it challenges the conceptualisation of hard policy being transferred by hard mechanisms; whilst creating specific instruments, tools and policies, the Gates Foundation utilises several soft ‘techniques’ to convince policy adopters at various levels. Secondly, the analysis stresses the ability of non-state actors to, in fact, utilise hard mechanisms of policy transfer through selectivity in terms of supported countries, regions or actors, as well as the project aid modalities.

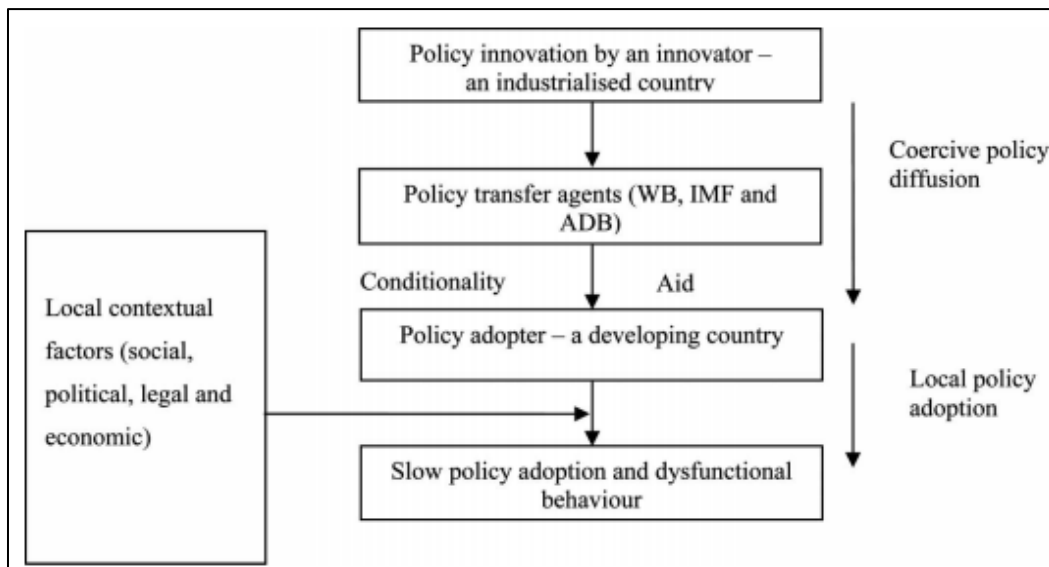
5. CONCLUSIONS: CONNECTING ANEW THE GLOBAL TO LOCAL IN SOCIAL POLICY TRANSFER

This paper has provided an empirical analysis of the world’s most powerful philanthropic foundation as a global social policy supplier. Representing 60 % of the overall philanthropic giving in the world in 2013-2015; mobilising funds in a day’s time to respond to the Ebola crisis; attracting substantial pharmaceutical market investment to developing countries; attracting world-leading specialists in various disciplines to its ranks; and, importantly, having two living co-chairs with the reputation of ‘donor superstars’, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation can be in many ways considered a ‘*Super Philanthropy*’. Thus, the study at hand recognises the Gates Foundation’s privileged position within the aid architecture, but argues it also represents the new wave of philanthropy – equipped with catalytic capital and private sector knowledge, driven by the ideals of effective altruism, and increasingly welcomed to global social policy processes.

Whilst this paper has not had the intention of assessing the actual policy impact the Gates Foundation has had in aid-receiving countries, it directed attention towards the unique strategies philanthropies can and have utilised to instigate policy transfer. The study pointed to the ways in which the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has – as an actor without political power – sought to influence the global aid community in adopting policy instruments and approaches of its preference through engagement in science and various networks. At the same time, the study shed light on the ways in which philanthropic foundations can utilise hard policy transfer mechanisms and indirect conditionality, particularly by selectivity in terms of geographies, actors and interventions, to influence policy directions in aid-receiving countries.

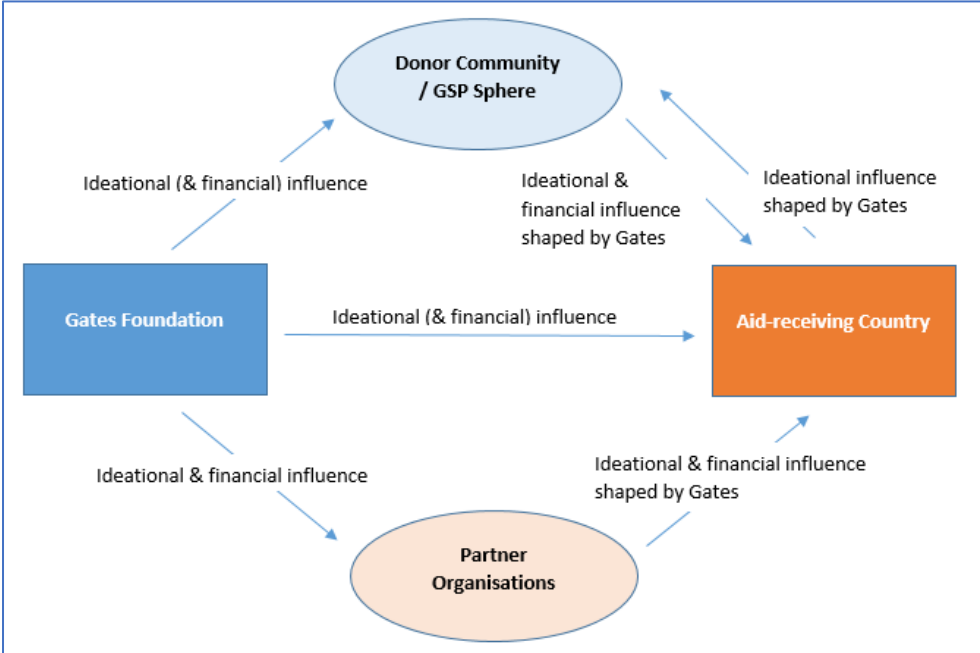
These insights challenge the current understanding of social policy transfer within the context of aid delivery. They both present private philanthropies as powerful policy suppliers alongside bilateral and multilateral actors and highlight the diversity and complexity of strategies and mechanisms at play. As the below figure shows, traditional conceptualisations of policy transfer through aid are founded upon a vision of purely vertical processes made coercive through direct aid conditionalities. However, as **figure 5** seeks to illustrate, transnational policy transfer by non-state actors can take multiple forms and avenues before it reaches the potential policy adapters, whilst also engaging in direct dialogue.

Figure 4. Policy transfer to developing countries as seen by Appuhami et al. (2011, p. 435)



These avenues and forms (*ideational* referring to soft- and *financial* referring to hard transfer mechanisms) are available – to a varying extent – depending on the extent to which private actors have been successful in legitimising their position through scientific justifications and generating general support by amassing a network of other legitimate actors such as multi- and bilateral donors behind its efforts. As mentioned above, the Gates Foundation is in a particularly well-placed position to do so, and further empirical study is required to robustly establish whether private philanthropies generally represent not only unique characteristics as policy suppliers, but also distinctive policy transfer strategies.

Figure 5. Policy transfer to developing countries by private philanthropies as presented in this paper



Although based on the limited case of Tanzania, another key finding of this analysis is the way in which the Gates Foundation has sought to influence policy directions within the global aid community largely in a visible and outspoken manner, whilst maintaining a relatively low profile in the aid receiving countries. Utilising a range of other actors, such as implementing organisations and external consultants, it can vicariously send policy signals to the concerned Ministries from where it bounces up to other donors, whilst occasionally engaging in a direct contact between the co-chairs and the government leaders. Such a complex engagement model can be particularly cumbersome to navigate for the aid-receiving countries as well as other donors. It equally masks the identity of the policy supplier in a manner that affects not only the country *ownership* in policy making, but also the *harmonisation* of aid activities – both of which represent core parts of the *Paris Agreement on Aid Effectiveness*²⁵. Consequently, whilst welcoming increased resources and new development approaches, the global aid community as well as the aid receiving countries ought to pay attention to the complexities involved in philanthropic aid in order to effectively lead development efforts.

²⁵ See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm>

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