NGOs and scholars concerned with declining and missing support for foreign aid regularly call for more transparency in aid agencies. In an article by **Haley J. Swedlund**, (Radboud University), and Bernhard Reinsberg, (University of Glasgow), the need for new forms of aid transparency is expressed, highlighting a previously missing focus on transparency towards citizens. The "open government" movement or the Aid Transparency Index focuses primarily on data uploaded to international databases, neglecting the accessibility for citizens. Both scholars advocate for increased reporting of aid agencies on their activities, presenting the data in a user-friendly and understandable manner, and the inclusion of subnational governments. Only then, government agencies can be held accountable and the support of citizens towards foreign aid and increased financing can be assured.

In the seminar, Haley presents recent research building on the Citizen Aid Transparency Dataset (CATD). The CATD provides information about 212 aid agencies across 37 donor countries and sheds light on their transparency with respect to the amount and quality of information (Reinsberg and Swedlund, 2023). Inspired by the CATD's data, Haley investigated in three survey experiments whether British citizens will be more supportive of aid when aid agencies are transparent about their organizational practices and priorities. In addition, **Amy Dodd**, "The ONE Campaign" (ONE), contributes to the seminar as a second main presenter and elaborates on aid transparency from the practitioner's perspective. The NGO works towards holding governments accountable to improve government actions in Africa, Europe, and North America.

The first presentation is held by Haley and features their most recent research, which has not yet been published. Central to their research is the question of whether agency reform can increase public support. One remarkable finding is that there is relatively low support for aid spending, while at the same time, knowledge about aid is extremely vague. Citizens expect 15-22% of GDP to be spent on foreign aid, while the actual amount of most countries is below 1%. With this in mind, the hypothesis that individuals will be more supportive of aid when aid agencies are transparent about their organizational practices and priorities is formulated.

The research shows that in general citizens value transparency, with skeptics in particular rewarding the amount of transparency. They prove that citizens do not differentiate between the type of information the agencies present if information and data are published.

In the second presentation, Amy Dodd exposes the experiences and statistics of the NGO ONE, which works in the field of transparency and aid. According to ONE, there is already much support to face current problems. However, people would face many other problems, including economic crisis, job security, and wages before they are able to engage with climate change and global development. At the same time, knowledge and understanding of climate change and aid are low, and typically only islands of support are created.

From the ONE campaigns, Amy reports that people care about efficiency and efficacy, while win-wins of interventions in other countries and at home are welcomed. According to the statistics of "Money Talks 2023", more spending of governments is expected to be allocated to living costs (53%), protecting nature (50%), tackling climate change (46%), and at last aid to poorer countries (23%). When agencies want to engage in transparency with citizens, they also need to consider the way they communicate. Big amorphous concepts might be alienating or polarizing, and mentioning pure monetary amounts is less convincing than the percentage of GDP. In reflection of earlier campaigns, Amy stresses that being tangible helps, that people respond to narratives, and that it takes time to achieve bigger goals.

Concluding her input, Amy details a few recommendations from the field: The quality of transparency matters as much as the quantity, and the topic must matter to people. Also, communication is key, therefore it should not be assumed that people do not have explicit knowledge. Last, it is advisable to be honest about the positive and negative effects of aid.

The issue of being honest in communication is also raised in the **subsequent Q&A**, where the question of responding to corruption accusations is raised. Bernhard adds that it is important to consider the trade-offs between corruption being exposed and honestly communicated, and the importance of contextualizing such scandals.

Another participant wonders about the connection between transparency and the level of economic development, especially in restrictive countries. The responses of Haley and Amy focus on the organizational context of the case. While government agencies only on rare occasions readjust their cooperation with a country, NGOs are much more flexible and open to criticism. NGOs face a high demand for transparency but are able to work in countries where government agencies are not able to work. Bernhard adds to the discussion by explaining the causality between transparency and economic development. More transparency increases the opportunity for aid within the country, and the level of economic development in this country leads to more transparency. A critical error would occur mostly in the first case, where a lack of transparency unfolds amid situations of low support and therefore leads to less potential economic development.

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