



# Pemberdayaan (*empowerment*): Asal-Usul, Evolusi dan Kritik

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## RESEARCH GROUP

# POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

### ABOUT

The PISP research group is committed to providing research, policy analysis, and assistance to exchange knowledge and strengthen capacities to implement adaptive and inclusive social protection policies.

The PISP research group is devoted to understanding patterns, causes, and consequences of poverty and socio-economic inequality. It aims to inform the public and policymakers on developing more effective social protection policies for the poorest and most marginalized people and communities.

### CURRENT THEMES OF FOCUS INCLUDE :

**Poverty:** multidimensional poverty, hunger, malnutrition, stunting, substandard housing, rural-urban disparities, marginalization of indigenous communities, unemployment, vulnerable workers (child, elderly, workers with disabilities), informal sector, homelessness, and gig workers.

**Inequality:** capitalism, income gap, digital inequality, gender inequality, inequality and taxes, social class, sandwich generations, jobless future and unpaid work.

**Social protection:** labor protections, healthcare, social assistance, cash transfer, social protections for all, universal basic income, universal child benefits, welfare conditions for the elderly, disability-inclusive social protections, unemployment benefits, maternal care, insurance, and pensions.



## MEET OUR TEAM



Yanu Endar Prasetyo, PhD  
(Coordinator)



Septi Nurhayati, S.Sos  
(Secretary)



Nawawi, PhD



Yanti Astrelina  
Purba, S.E., M.E.K.K



Syahmida Syahbuddin  
Arsyad, MPS



Ruth Meilianna, S.E.



Ir. C. Yudilastiantoro, M.P.

### ACTIVITIES:

- **Writing group:** each member of the PISP Research Group will exchange critiques and feedback on their manuscripts for international journal publication.
- **Book club:** members reflect on what they read to lead them to become effective writers/speakers and familiarize them with different topics and issues on poverty, inequality, and social protection.
- **Grant/proposal writing:** each member of the PISP Research Group is involved in several activities, including planning, searching, writing, packaging, and submitting a proposal to a funder.
- **Research collaboration:** in this activity, the PISP Research Group intends to collaborate with any related stakeholders and learn how to approach problems from various disciplines to lead to the development of innovative solutions.
- **PISP Seminars:** the group runs an annual seminar with distinguished speakers from the various branches of PISP studies and its allied subjects.

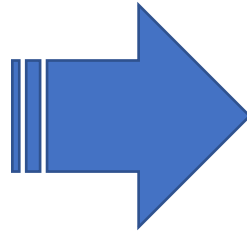
### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING OR PARTNERING WITH US?

**email:** [pisp.rcpop@brin.go.id](mailto:pisp.rcpop@brin.go.id)

# From ... To...

## 1960 - 1970

- Conscientization
- Grassroots political mobilization
- A radical transformation of inequitable political structures
- Assimilate power with individual & economic decision-making



## Present

- A vague and falsely consensual concept
- Domestication of the concept
- De-politicize collective power
- To legitimize existing top-down development policies and programs
- A concept at the service of the status quo



## The Paradox of Empowerment

(Calves, 2009; Weidenstedt, 2016)

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968)

Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997)



Critical consciousness

Dominated consciousness



# development dialogue

A journal of  
international development  
cooperation  
published by the  
Dag Hammarskjöld  
Foundation,  
Uppsala

1987:1

## The Legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld

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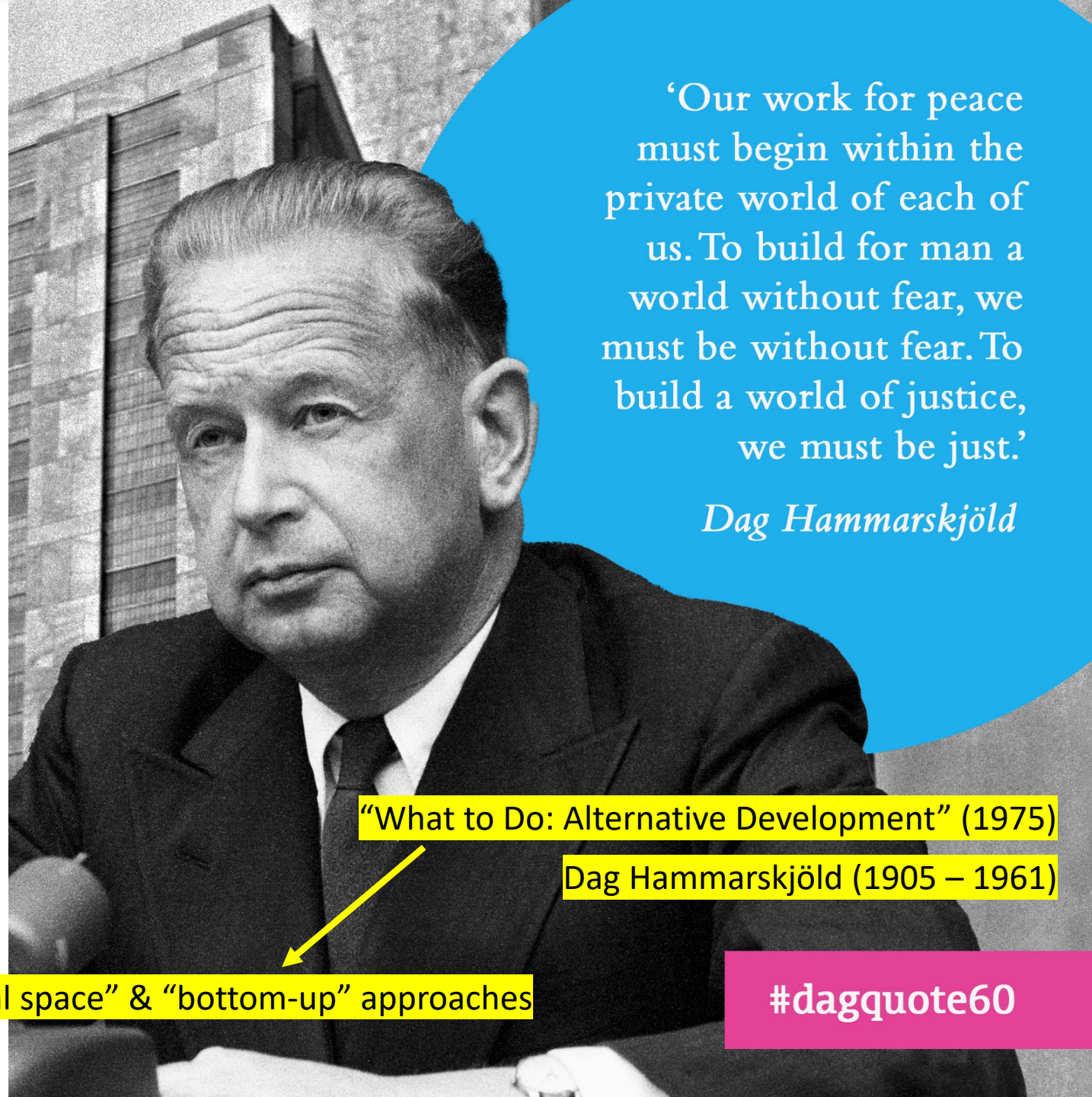
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‘Our work for peace  
must begin within the  
private world of each of  
us. To build for man a  
world without fear, we  
must be without fear. To  
build a world of justice,  
we must be just.’

*Dag Hammarskjöld*

“What to Do: Alternative Development” (1975)

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905 – 1961)

“Local space” & “bottom-up” approaches

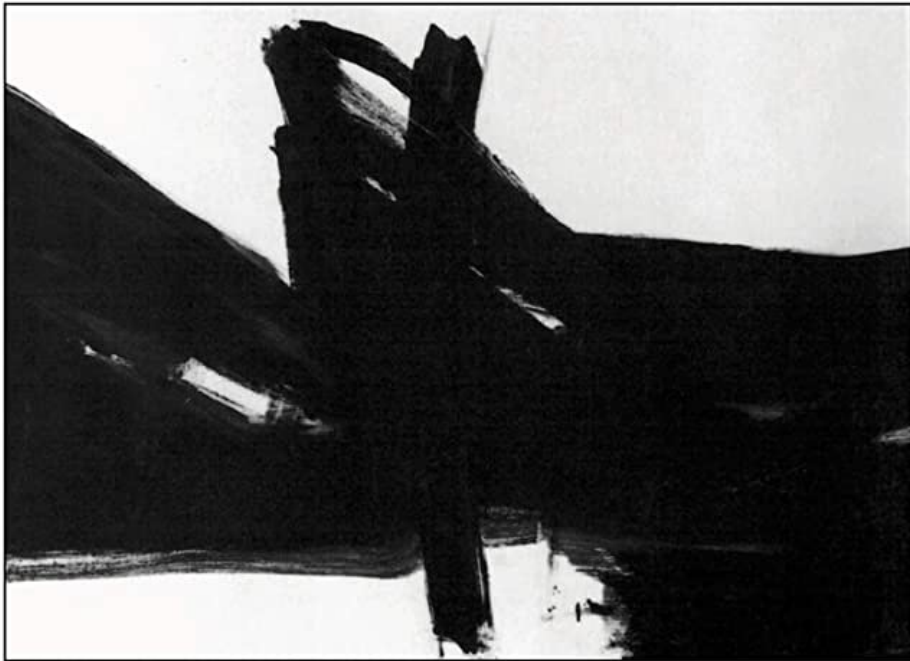
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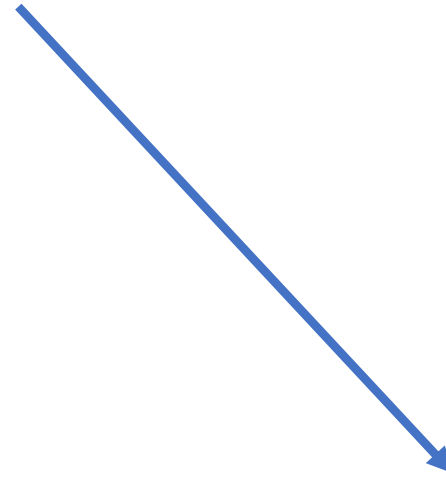
JOHN FRIEDMANN

# EMPOWERMENT

*The Politics of  
Alternative Development*



Classical economic model (focused on  
production and profit)



Alternative model (focused on people &  
environment)

(John Friedmann, 1992)

# EMPOWERMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

A Sourcebook



edited by Deepa Narayan

...From women's empowerment to the empowerment of the poor...

**Empowerment (2002)** = the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives"

(Narayan, 2002)

**Empowerment (2006)** = the process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes

(Aslop, Bertelsen, and Holland, 2006)

# A Vague Goal

- Empowerment is a **vague, resolutely optimistic**, and “just” term that can only bring about consensus, like poverty alleviation.
- An umbrella term for all sorts of help and positive change in people’s lives, without necessarily defining **what exactly is meant by empowerment** (Weidenstedt, 2016).
- Without any clear definition, empowerment has become a vague goal, a fashionable term that **is impossible to implement in the field**.
- A catchy but hazily defined term that has become “**hegemonic**” and **incontestable** (Cornwall and Brock 2005).

# The Domestication of the Concept

- A transition from “**liberating empowerment**” to “**liberal empowerment**” (the maximization of individual interests).
- Empowerment measures are centered on indicators such as women’s access to services, employment, and education and **focus little on political mobilization or participation.**
- A “romantic” vision of local and community-based power wherein internal power relations, conflict, and **social inequalities are deemphasized or ignored.**
- The “participation of the poor” is generally reduced to **its simplest form** (informing and consulting the poor).

# The Service of the Status Quo

- Empowerment today is viewed by international organizations not as a mechanism for social transformation but rather as **a means to increase efficiency and productivity while maintaining the status quo** (Parpart 2002)
- Recycling the old approaches to integrating women into the development process (affirmative action, legislative change, literacy programs), **without ever addressing the structural factors** perpetuating domination or considering the many forms of domination.
- The empowerment process cannot be reduced to standards, objectives, or measurements **decided “from above” and applied to all (MDGs/SDGs)**. The essence of empowerment is leaving the main stakeholders in the field to define the goals and methods of action (Batliwala 2007).

# The paradox of empowerment (1)

## A

Empowerment as “grassroots/social movement”

Driven from within (bottom up)

People C to empower the same people C through self-empowerment or via people/organization D

## B

Empowerment as “life/performance enhancement”

Driven from the outside (top down).

Workplace contexts, counseling, social work, community psychology, and so on, and usually involves a party A who wants to empower someone else—party B.

# The paradox of empowerment (2)

- **First**, the attempt to empower is meaningful only as long as the empowering party A is more powerful than the to-be-empowered party B. A fact that might evoke various negative feelings on the side of the empoweree.
- **Second**, giving cannot be free of reciprocity expectations, whether they be explicit or implicit. B must show gratitude toward A, whether or not B wanted, needed, or liked the transferred resource.
- **Third**, A knows better what is good for the empoweree B than B knows himself or herself. No matter if A indeed knows better than B, acting empowering can, thus, communicate a paternalistic attitude, which can lead to disappointing, weakening, and disempowering rather than strengthening the empoweree.

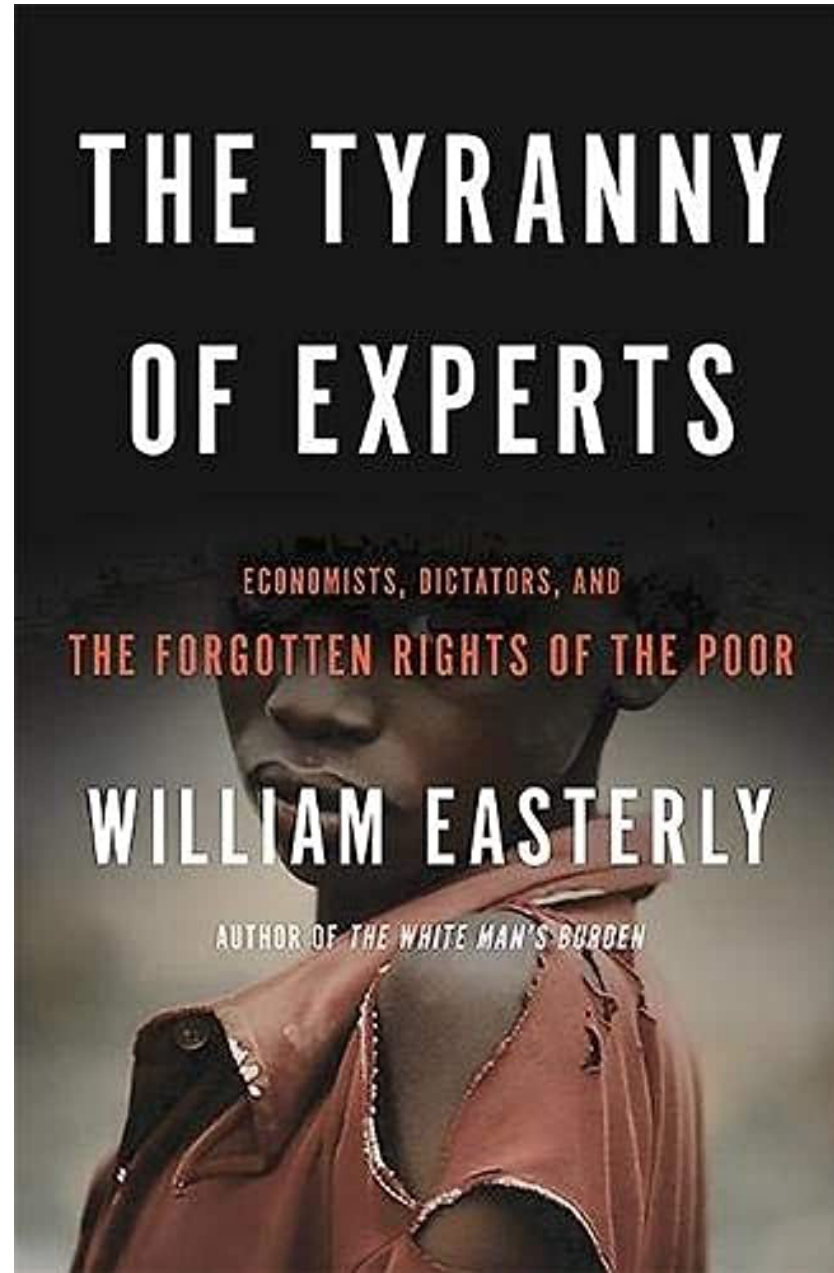
# The paradox of empowerment (3)

**Negative psychological consequences of (dis)empowering communication:**

- **A potential of weakening and costly for the empoweree.**
- The costliness for the empoweree appears on an emotional and/or interpersonal level, for instance, in the form of **reduced self-esteem, fear of a bad reputation, decrease in self-respect, and so on.**

## Recommended Book:

*“There are no silver bullets for promoting economic development, and the development principles should be correct first and built bottom up...”*



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