# Navigation by Judgment: Why and When Top Down Management of Foreign Aid Doesnâ??t Work

## Description

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Honig, Dan. 2018. Navigation by Judgment: Why and When Top Down Management of Foreign Aid Doesnâ??t Work. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

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**YouTube presentation** by the author: https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=bdjeoBFY9Ss

**Snippet from video**: Errors arising from too much or too little control can be seen or unseen. When control is too little, errors are more likely to be seen. People do things they should not have done. When control is too much, errors are likely to be unseen, people donâ??t do things they should have done. Given this asymmetry, and other things being equal, there is a bias towards too much control

Book review: By Duncan Green in his 2018 From Poverty to Power blog

**Publishers blurb:**

Foreign aid organizations collectively spend hundreds of billions of dollars annually, with mixed results. Part of the problem in these endeavors lies in their execution. When should foreign aid organizations empower actors on the front lines of delivery to guide aid interventions, and when should distant headquarters lead?

In Navigation by Judgment, Dan Honig argues that high-quality implementation of foreign aid programs often requires contextual information that cannot be seen by those in distant headquarters. Tight controls and a focus on reaching pre-set measurable targets often prevent front-line workers from using skill, local knowledge, and creativity to solve problems in ways that maximize the impact of foreign aid. Drawing on a novel database of over 14,000 discrete development projects across nine aid agencies and eight paired case studies of development projects, Honig concludes that aid agencies will often benefit from giving field agents the authority to use their own judgments to guide aid delivery. This â??navigation by judgmentâ?• is particularly valuable when environments are unpredictable and when accomplishing an aid programâ??s goals is hard to accurately measure.

Highlighting a crucial obstacle for effective global aid, Navigation by Judgment shows that the management of aid projects matters for aid effectiveness

**Category**

1. Books

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