UNINTENDED REVOLUTION

Middle class, development and non-governmental organizations

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For my family,
whose never-ceasing support
gave me the will to carry on

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Shortly, I have written the following pages about social class. I have written about myself and people whom I met during my fieldwork in Addi, our practicing of class, our efforts in reinforcing and upgrading social standings. More particularly, I have written about the ways in which development performed in and by non-governmental – organizations[1] serves as a tool for these practices. Satish Deshpande states that:

> 'theoretically, the concept of class is located at the confluence of economy, society and polity. […] It is in this sense that the three spheres are seen as interpenetrating and even integrated with one another. But though integrated, they are also of unequal importance – causal priority is accorded to the economy […]; what you *are* (at the economic level) shapes what you *experience* (at social level) which ultimately determines what you *do* (at the political level).' (Deshpande 1997: 126)

Following his lead, I further argue that the particular mix of competences is an element which consists of the cultural capital of the middle classes; although it is often confused with the merits of a particular individual. Another element of middle-classness consists of identities, such as 'caste, community, or region' (Deshpande 1997: 140–141). Similarly, I suggest that categories such as race, gender, religion, nationality and caste might be considered identities of which the class status of NGO employees are comprised of rather than as class equivalents.[2]

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[1]   However, aware of terminological connotations, I decided to use forms of 'non-profit organizations', 'non-governmental organizations', 'third sector (organizations)', 'civil society organizations' alternatively. More on these terms and my understanding of it can be found in the following chapters.

[2]   Obviously, Deshpande's considerations on social class and cultural capital are based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory. More on theoretical departures can be found in chapter 3.

In an endeavour to analyse theoretical and practical implications of particular class composition of the NGOs that I did my fieldwork with, I attempted to apply a perspective of socio-cultural anthropology in its reflexive manner. First of all, it might be seen (and it is) as an ethical obligation. As it is widely recognized, the discipline has a long and very often embarrassing tradition of involvement in colonial (e.g. Pels 2008) and development (e.g. Asad 1973; Escobar 1995) projects. From this point of view, ethnography of postcolonial and so called developing countries, such as India, requires particular attention to the anthropologist's participation and the potential influence of research. In order to provide the reader with a clear picture of my involvement, I illustrate the ways in which my research plans were being modified during the fieldwork. Second of all, I describe the course of discovery with the belief that it is part of the same process as it is justification (Burawoy 1991: 8). Finally, in describing the ways in which I was involved in NGOs' work during my fieldwork, as well as the ways in which my fieldwork was ultimately used to enhance my social standing, I acknowledge that I was part of the very same processes that I put a critical angle on. Therefore, the major part of this chapter is an effort to fully grasp my involvement, personal features and preferences which not only influenced the choice I made about the research topic, but also the perception of its participants and the final analysis. Other than that, this chapter is also an initial clarification of the following sections. It sheds light on the factors influencing the scope of third sector organizations in India, and describes, in particular, the organizations with which I cooperated.[3] It also draws on the contribution I am have attempted to bring into previous research on the topic and, accordingly, presents the structure of the study, as well as its methodology.

IN SEARCH OF THE FIELD SITE

Although I, eventually, liked the idea of going to India, one might say that my first visit there was a coincidence. At that time, in 2007, student research groups in our Department were proliferating and vivid. Many of them provided an interesting option to organize and conduct (under academic supervision of the faculty members) an anthropological fieldwork, considered a rite of passage, a necessary milestone on the way to the anthropologists'

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[3] In order to protect the privacy of my respondents, I have changed the names of organizations and their employees.

community. I discovered the very existence of anthropology as an academic discipline quite late – having spent a few years studying political science, but from the beginning, I was fascinated with this discipline, and enthusiastic about the possibilities it offers. It seemed to me the only way to understand societies, people and their actions. And since the very beginning I was more interested in mechanisms explaining how societies and cultures work, with concrete issues (such as women's rights and practices oscillating around it), with methods of conducting fieldwork than with a particular region. I should probably admit, with a certain dose of self-irony, that on a more or less subconscious level, the idea of doing fieldwork in some 'far and exotic' place was appealing to me.

Therefore, when we gathered with 13 other students to plan our 'first serious research expedition', I opted for Turkey: which I perceived as 'far and exotic' enough, and at the same time – 'safe enough'. I was not an avid traveler at that time. Frankly, before planning our trip, the only foreign adventures I was a part of, were limited to a short visit to Germany (visiting my father, an economic migrant by then) when I was 12, one-day trip to Slovakia and a two-month career in a US cleaning service, dusting and mopping American office spaces at night. My knowledge of English was even more limited than my travelling experiences. Although I was able to read academic articles, I was much less advanced in speaking: proud of myself for succeeding to order a cheeseburger at McDonald's or asking an American office employee whether I could empty their garbage. Under these circumstances, Turkey seemed a perfect option. 'Far, exotic', but it was still part of Europe, wasn't it? Still part of Europe, but with 'widely known' problems of gender inequality, right? I did not convince my colleagues. I was outvoted and India was chosen as our destination.[4] Although these details might, at first, be perceived as irrelevant, I believe that sharing them is crucial to the understanding of what I personally gained from my efforts to become an anthropologist. Reflecting back on those years I realize that my fascination with anthropology, as well as, the desire to conduct fieldwork in a 'far and exotic'

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[4] Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań has a recognized tradition and achievements in research in Asia. Therefore, we had a chance to consult specialists in this field. Professor Zbigniew Jasiewicz and Przemysław Hinca (Ph.D.), together with Rafał Beszterda (Ph.D.) from the Polish Academy of Science, gave us a necessary introduction to both anthropological work that have been already written on India, and practical tips of finding oneself in this country. Thanks to them, and obviously with following visits and the literature reviews, India has become less 'far and exotic', but more a concrete country with its people and history.

place, were nothing more than an endeavour to climb on a social ladder. Anthropology, as I believed, constituted the best way to acquire 'the truth' about our social world. What is more, I considered conducting fieldwork as one of the most difficult, but accurate way to get to know this 'truth'.[5] All together, I attempted to add to my social background through joining the community of academics, and in turn contribute to the 'dominant intellectual order' (Lynch & O'Neill 1994; Spivak 1988). These ambitions have accompanied me to the end of the road, namely – writing this book. The goal of gaining cultural capital remains as vivid today as it was at the beginning of my journey.

It accompanied me when I developed my first research project on the situation of widows in India. 'Traditionally' blamed for their husbands' deaths, they were to be deprived of any rights, abandoned by their families and forced to live in the streets. Their situation, however, was just one of the examples of women's mistreatment which was – as I read – prevalent in India. The inspiration for my research questions came from media or academic articles which stressed the discrimination of women in this country. The most appealing (to me) account – as it seemed the most biased – was the article of Grzegorz Bywalec who stated:

'India is the country of men. […] Without a man, woman does not exist in Indian everyday life, which is dominated by tradition. […] Women pray to give birth to a boy, as the life of women is hell. Women in India do not have any aspirations or dreams. They are totally subordinated.' (Bywalec 2005)

Reported cases of sex selective abortions, dowry deaths, rapes, girls' malnutrition, child marriages, low literacy ratio among women and poor health conditions, India still continues to be considered as a country where women are marginalized. Rita Banerji, a gender activist, goes as far as stating:

'For the Indian patriarchy, the woman is a sexual resource, a compilation of a womb, breasts and vagina for its use; she is a negotiable, marketable commodity. The unfortunate reality is that she is not assessed much differently by her own parents. From the moment of birth, a daughter is viewed as a financial liability. Being of

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[5]   For instance, I remember when one of the professors with a long experience on researching in North India, publicly congratulated me for being able to 'survive in the city I conducted my research in for such a long time'. Opinions on this city vary, but it is not uncommon to hear complaints for high level of pollution, crowdedness, prevalent 'Eve-teasing' in the streets and so on.

little use to her parents, she is raised for the consumption of others, namely the sexual and reproductive needs of the patriarchal lineage in which her marriage will be arranged.' (Banerji 2008: 305)

Some examples from academic sites (Jacobson & Wadley 1992) provided evidence that such discrimination was only possible as it was embedded in the Hindu religious system. I doubted. What was the actual influence of religious system on people's lives? If the situation of women in India is so terrible, why do they not rebel? As a young person impressed by the concept of 'militant anthropologist' (Scheper-Hughes 1995), I decided there must be something under the surface: the widows must be misrepresented as powerless victims of the patriarchy. Boldly enough, I felt moral and ethical obligations to examine the 'real' situation on the ground, and present the notions as understood by Indian widows. I came across postcolonial feminists' writings (mostly influenced by Madhu Kishwar, Uma Narayan and Mary E. John) and I deduced that if women in India were not a homogenous mass, the voice of different factions must be listened to, and what is more – it is the role of the anthropologist to reveal those voices. Naïve as I was (to assume that I was capable of completing this task), I arrived in India in October 2007 in search of widows and their views on discrimination.

I headed for Vrindavan which was known as the City of Widows. Quite logically I expected to find my respondents there. However, first stop on the way to Vrindavan was one of the metropolis in North India.[6] I spent my first two weeks in Addi visiting women's non-governmental organizations with the hope of gathering essential information and tips for my research on widows. Meetings and interviews with members of NGO community have been very instructive. Obviously, I cannot compare the knowledge that I got from those women with any literature review. They also showed me that I was very naïve[7] with my initial research plans. I was told that it would be impossible, or at least very difficult, to arrange any interviews. I was told to forget spending quality time[8] with poor widows living on the streets. Although I am not convinced that I should not have tried anyway, I see where these pieces of advice were coming from. I was perceived as too

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[6] My priority is providing full anonymity of my respondents. Thus, being aware of methodological problems that it bears, I refrain from providing the city's correct name. Instead, I change it for 'one of Indian metropolis' or 'Addi'.

[7] It should be noted that my remarks about naïvety of my initial approach are most probably an attempt for self-reflexivity (a part of competences that I claim to acquire through my research).

[8] In other words: participant observation.

inexperienced and insecure to pursue research on such a delicate matter. Adding to that was a language barrier: I did not speak local languages, except for English. These words of advice showed that I was perceived as not competent to pursue the kind of fieldwork I planned to do; but also added to practical outcomes of my research. After some considerations, I extended my stay in Addi and continued delving into women's NGOs sector in this city. I also initiated first contacts at the local university and one of NGOs[9] which provided me with an opportunity of extended literature review. I considered this time in Addi (almost four months) as a pilot study and decided to come back shortly after. Probably during this first visit in India, I began shifting the idea of my research – from widows' discrimination to activities of women's NGOs.

As I came to India for the second time, in November 2008, I knew that there were advantages and disadvantages to this switch. Advantages: I had already made some contacts and I was placed in the city with which I was familiar to some extent. Disadvantages: my 'contacts' were not so eager to continue our cooperation when they got to know that I was planning to conduct research on them. I also have to admit that, in addition to my interlocutors' fears about their privacy and pictures of their organizations which might have been a result of my study, I was not an equal partner in this conversation. Although most of them were friendly towards me, I was never able to develop this kind of relationship which is every-anthropologist's dream – a dream about 'real' friendship. I believe that I was perceived as a 'weirdo'. Travelling alone to a distant country, with a vague career as M.A./Ph.D. student[10], ambiguous research plans, unmarried, with scarce financial resources, dressed in often dusty and old clothes which I brought from Poland[11], possessing comparatively limited English… I was less than a match for well-educated Indian ladies, engaged in social work, devoted to their families, with their perfect English and dressing skills.[12] Therefore, when I approached my former acquaintances asking them

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[9] A non-governmental organization which runs a resource centre and therefore collected large volumes of literature on situation of women in India.

[10] My first trip to India was as an M.A. student, the second – after being admitted to the Ph.D. programme.

[11] I found it quite challenging to wear appropriate clothes. Indian clothes seemed too complicated to match and maintain for a European, and Addi dust made my Western-like uniform unpresentable. I did not have at that time the basic know-how of dressing up, taking prpper care of my clothes in a weather that was different than in Poland and therefore, I was distanced from my always well--dressed interlocutors.

[12] Which later led me to have a rethink about the differences between cultural capitals.

about the possibility of conducting research on them and their organizations, I heard 'No'. I was advised to do a paid internship[13] in one of the development organizations – a solution I could neither afford nor accept (as I perceived myself as too experienced and culturally sensitive to be introduced to volunteer work by a paid guardian). Important obstacle was my firm belief that participant observation secures the best access to social reality. In addition to all the advantages of this technique, I think that I was under the influence of my fellow anthropologists who considered it to be the most valuable method in anthropology, the best one that allows you to grasp tensions between people's acts and declarations and thus allows for the most accurate understanding of the social world. From today's perspective, I think I believed that if I was to uplift my social position and join the community of anthropologists, it could be attained only through participant observation in the field.[14]

What is more, I was especially interested in the clash between tradition and modernization in the everyday lives of NGO employees, and mutual influences between their professional and private spheres – and here once again participant observation seemed to me as the most suited technique. NGO workers, however, even if they eagerly agreed to interviews, would turn helpless in arranging an access to their organizations on a daily basis. After a few days of wandering around I was disappointed with poor result. Facing the necessity of re-formulating my research project one more time, still overwhelmed with the ambition of becoming a 'real' anthropologist by engaging in participant observation, I was in despair. For these reasons, I agreed to an interview, as I think about it today, in suspicious circumstances. While having dinner in an Addi tourist area restaurant, I met a man who promised to arrange a conversation with his wife in the following evening. The lady, as he claimed, worked in the development sector. I went to the appointment site, but I never met his wife – assuming that she even existed. Instead, I suffered an abuse that was beyond my thoughts, and as a consequence abandoned my research plans for some time. I believe that this incident heavily influenced not only the final choice of field site, but also my perception of the people with whom I did my fieldwork.

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[13] In such an arrangement, I would be obligated to pay for the possibility of gaining experience at a chosen organization.

[14] We spent hours discussing the prevalence of participant observation over other techniques used in social science studies. It was from these passionate discussions that I developed the idea of participant observation being the only way of 'real' anthropologists. Although I still firmly believe in the advantages of participant observation, it became obvious to me that this method can be supplemented in regard to a particular research situation.

INITIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Eventually, I was able to convince myself that my 'bad luck' was not a matter of place. However, in order for that to happen, I had to make sure that my field site would be safe. In this process I lost all interest in 'poor widows'. Regardless of previous misunderstandings, NGOs' employees (most of those whom I met were women) in Addi seemed to be a safe alternative. I thought that if I were to feel at home, most probably I would feel so among educated, English-speaking ladies from the Indian middle class. Regardless of previous obstacles in establishing relationships with them, it shows that I perceived them as more similar to me and this 'similarity' (no matter how politically incorrect it sounds) meant 'westernization'. Unconsciously, I incorporated well-known division: 'modern' ('similar', 'westernized') NGOs' employees versus 'traditional' ('different', 'poor') widows.

   As a result of preceding events and my new perspective, I focused on developing a research proposal in which I eventually decided to carry out my research on women's non-governmental organizations which fought against discrimination of other women. As such, my research is ascribed to the tradition of 'studying up' (Nader 1972; Marcus & Fisher 1996; Gusterson 1997). The interviews which I conducted during my first stay in Addi suggested that ladies who I met were struggling between fulfilling the roles of mothers, wives and daughters, 'good housewives' (or, as I called it initially 'good women') and professional careers in the third sector. I looked at their motivations, and the ways that they understood their roles. What is more, I focused on the notion of being 'modern' women, particularly on whether and how it was related to 'equality of rights'. On the one hand, it could be easily imagined that by some of their Western counterparts their devotion to home matters would be perceived as 'traditional', if not even 'backward'. On the other hand, women whom I interviewed would describe themselves as 'modern' and in their everyday professional lives they were 'improving' the conditions of poor women in a process of empowerment – a process of achieving modernity through economic and social 'advancement'. It seemed crucial to me to understand how empowerments were understood by them – both for them (middle class Indian women) and for others (lower class or/and caste Indian women). Particularly, I was interested in describing a potential clash between Western/Indian and Indian middle class/upper and lower caste/class understanding of 'modern womanhood'. I presumed that the NGOs' employees were in between these two worlds. What is more, I presumed that their perceptions heavily influenced the scope of empowerment and development as it

was presented to the NGOs' beneficiaries, and thus their role in this process seemed to be crucial in grasping the dynamics of contemporary development projects. Importantly, if empowerment was a recognized ingredient of development, how to understand the latter?

Some scholars oppose development itself, claiming that the notions of modernity and development are imperialistic in their essence. For instance, Arturo Escobar states that development is:

> 'a historically singular experience, the creation of a domain of thought and action […] the system of power that regulates its practice, and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which development people come to recognize themselves as developed and underdeveloped.' (Escobar 1995: 10)

The account of development as an imperialist project, however, could be repudiated on the basis of its dismissing people's struggles for development. One cannot deny the efforts of numerous organizations and people in less affluent (therefore – not imperial) countries for 'achieving modernity'. Since 1947, when Harry Truman announced development to be a remedy for extreme poverty in the world, it remains an important element of everyday life. Thus, even if development is an imperial endeavour, it is at the same time undertaken by those towards whom it is directed, as well as by local development brokers. In this context, some scholars claim that there are alternatives to European-centered development. These can come from reshaping European-originated concepts (e.g. human rights), looking for junctions in order to create a new form of modernity which combine European and 'native' categories (Chakrabarty 2000; 2002). As Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff put it:

> 'Modernity, itself [is] always historically constructed, being understood here as an ideological formation in terms of which societies valorize their own practices by contrast to the specter of barbarism and other marks of negation.' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2002, quoted in Cooper 2005: 129)

Therefore, while the forms of modernity could differ, everyone is undergoing development in their own distinct way in terms of time, space and conditions. As James Ferguson (1990; 2006) noted, these strands pose a serious problem. If everyone is already developed and modern, or if the development processes are an imperialistic evil, why should we still talk about them and analyse development at all? As I mentioned above, the necessity of doing so, lies in the vitality of the concepts of development and modernity in everyday

people's lives and discourses. Dismissing development means also dismiss-
ing these people around the globe who try to be modern, it means neglecting
their constant struggle to live in a better world, safe from social, cultural and
economic inequalities (Ferguson 1990; 2006). Ferguson claims that:

> 'The aspiration to modernity has been an aspiration to rise in the world in eco-
> nomic and political terms; to improve one's way of life, one's standing, one's place-
> in-the-world. Modernity has thus been a way of talking about global inequality
> and about material needs and how they might be met. In particular, it has indexed
> specific aspiration to such primary "modern" goods as improved housing, health
> care and education.' (Ferguson 2006: 32)

As Frederick Cooper called it, referring to James Ferguson's considerations,
I focused on 'how is the modernity' – and development – 'used in the making
of claims' (Cooper 2005: 131). Moreover, I tried to answer the question of *how
development is being practiced* (Sharma 2008). I believed that this approach
allows to move beyond rigid understanding of development as unilateral
dominant discourse and to grasp the resistance towards it and consequent
remodelling by local actors. In other words, I asked how women (NGOs'
employees) in their everyday practices, at work as well as in their private lives,
construct the development understandings? How the empowerment process
is used to influence their own and others' behaviours and ways of thinking?
In order to embrace the process of (re)creating meanings (and not a static
picture or oversimplified dichotomy of modern-traditional), I turned to the
concept of translation. Shu-mei Shih (2002), writing about Chinese feminists
in dialogue with their Western counterparts, highlights power relations which
allow the latter to decide about the final shape of differences and similarities.
As Uma Narayan puts it:

> '[…] I believe it is a serious mistake to take this 'assumption of sameness' as the
> singular defining feature of 'cultural imperialism' when 'assumptions of difference'
> have played a substantial role as well. Once it is recognized that 'assumptions of dif-
> ference' have been deployed for cultural imperialist ends no less expeditious than
> 'assumptions of sameness', the temptation to relativism that is motivated by a desire
> to avoid cultural imperialism ought, I believe, to considerably weaken.' (Narayan
> 2000: 5)

Following them, I believe, therefore, that conceptualization in terms of differ-
ence and sameness is both pointless (one can never discover original meaning,

because it does not exist as such) and embedded in power relations. Translations, on the contrary, emphasize the continuous transformations and the lack of the original (Tsing 1997). I followed David Mosse who states that it is not only significant to notice what is the subject of translation (texts, words), but also to go beyond that, to:

> 'the practices of closed epistemic communities, policy networks, the managed agenda – setting consultations and consultant experts (including themselves), and the consensus formation involved in manufacturing transferable expert knowledge.' (Mosse 2005: 15)

DIVERSITY OF NON–GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN INDIA

When I came to Addi the next time, in April 2011, I was equipped with the research questions as described in the previous section. My focus on women's non-governmental organizations and their employees was already firm. However, the fragile contacts which I established during previous stays had vanished by that time, and in this sense my search for a field site started again. The diversity represented by the Indian third sector did not make my task particularly easy. While in Poland, I sent out hundreds of emails to NGOs, asking for a possibility of internship.[15] While in India, I would visit offices in person and enquire about the possibilities of cooperation. I prepared the list of organizations dealing with women's issues to gather potential options in one place. It consisted of 127 positions in Addi alone and was not exhaustive. The exact number of third sector organizations in India is impossible to assess. First, there is a variety of institutions using this definition, including entities who define themselves as grassroots, non-profit, civil society organizations, etc.[16] Second, there was a lack of statistics regularly conducted by the Indian government or its agencies.[17] However, certain studies have been undertaken. For instance, in July 2010 the media, based on the study commissioned by the government in 2008, sparked the news that there is one non-profit organization for every

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[15] As finances for my research were secured with a grant from the Committee of Scientific Research, I determined that unpaid internship would be the best way to spend time in the organizations on a daily basis.

[16] See more on this issue in the following chapters.

[17] I did not encounter any studies by private institutions as well.

400 people in India (*Hindustan Times* 2010; *Indian Express* 2010). Authors
of the study employ the term

> 'non-profit sector [which] covers legal and social entities which serve institu-
> tional sectors, namely households, corporations and general government. This
> sector is often referred to as the "third sector" with government and its agencies of
> public administration being the first, and the corporate world being the second.'
> (*Survey…* 2009: 2)

They claim that there is 3.3 million NPOs[18] registered in India under the Soci-
eties of Registration Act 1860, Mumbai Public Trust or its equivalents in other
states. This 3.3 million consists of approximately 90% of all organizations
registered (*Survey…* 2009: 5)[19], out of which 41% are located in urban areas
(*Survey…* 2009: 6). Authors of an annual report released by the Ministry of
Home Affairs for the years 2010-2011 on 'Receipt and Utilization of Foreign
Contribution by Voluntary Associations' provide the unofficial information
about more than 20 lakh[20] of non-governmental organizations 'registered
with Societies Registration Act 1860, Trust Act etc.' (*Annual…* 2011: 3), while
only 2% of them were in the same time registered under Foreign Contribu-
tion Registration Act (*Annual…* 2011: 3) – the law which regulates flows of
foreign funds into, among others, the Indian third sector.[21]

   Therefore, according to governmental accounts, the number of third sector
organizations varies from two to 3.3 million. This span is rather significant
and the unfeasibility of determining the exact number of TSOs might be
disappointing. However, it seems even more important to notice the overall
growth of this sector. Out of 3.3 million organizations surveyed in 2008,
10% of them were registered before 1980, 15% from 1981 to 1990, 30% from
1991 to 2000 and 45% after 2000 (*Survey…* 2009: 8). What is more, while
before 1971 most organizations were being registered for religious activity,

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[18] Non-profit organizations.
[19] In India, there are other laws under which third sector organizations might be registered, i.e.: Indian
      Trust Act 1882, Religious Endowment Act 1863, Section 25 of Companies Act 1956 etc. (*Survey…*
      2009: 5).
[20] One lakh is 100.000.
[21] The fact that between 2008 and 2011, according to the report, the United States were the biggest con-
      tributor, while Addi was the biggest recipient of foreign funds (*Annual…* 2011: 18) initially seemed
      to be interesting for my research questions, however it eventually also seemed futile to employ – as
      it was impossible to weigh an actual influence on the basis of sole economic factors nor it was pos-
      sible to measure material flows versus non-material flows.

since then most of them declare social service as the main area of their actions (*Survey...* 2009: 8), which reflects a shift in defining basic goals of these TSOs. The rise of these organizations in India in the 1970s is understood as a consequence of a growing dissatisfaction with government and parties' politics. In the opinion of many, the project of Indian development failed as the gap between rich and poor continued deepening. In this sense, NGOs were perceived as institutions which could provide an expert, technical knowledge, autonomous from the state's approach to modernization and development. In general[22], government supported those organizations that maintained its efforts in relief work, especially for natural disasters and facilitated its model of development. The relatively welcoming environment for NGOs was also a result of the decline of the Congress party – and more particularly – an erosion of local base towards centralization on a national level, creating space for civil society organizations (Sen 1999). The state of Emergency (1975–1977), introduced by Indira Gandhi as an answer to growing unrest in the country and a threat of divesture of power, put a shadow on NGO's activities. Significantly, one of the most important laws regulating the third sector in India – the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act – was passed during this period and aimed at the state's control over funds received by organizations from overseas (Sen 1999). With its later amendments, this act remains in force today. As Nivedita Menon and Aditya Nigam called it, the state of Emergency affected Indian political and social domains to the extent that it resulted in a social trauma (Menon & Nigam 2007: 5). Specifically, suspending civil liberties during the Emergency, resulted in a growth of pro-democratization atmosphere afterwards. The growth of TSOs'[23] number in the 1980s might be seen as one of the results of this diversification movement. Other factors have also contributed to the increasing number and significance of civil society organizations. Although the state was encouraging non-governmental organizations to participate in development projects in the 1960s and 1970s (Sen 1999: 352), we can see that the major expansion, the so-called 'boom' of TSOs has been taking place since the 1980s, with the increasing availability of both foreign and government funds and in consistency with economic liberalization (O'Reilly 2004: 174).[24]

Major changes in Indian economic (and political) systems were brought by the government of Rajiv Gandhi who succeeded the leadership of the major political

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[22] More on state-NGOs relationship see chapter 6.
[23] Third sector organizations.
[24] Similarly to other 'poor countries' (O'Reilly 2004: 174).

party – the Congress – after his mother's assassination in 1984. First, Rajiv and his colleagues (the 'computer boys') saw technological advancement as a key for Indian prosperity. They were determined to bring their country on to the modernization path and in their opinion, the major obstacle to this advancement was bureaucracy (Menon & Nigam 2007: 8). Second, Rajiv's administration, 'dismantl[ed] the import-substituting model of industrializations and […] open[ed] up [the] international trade' (Menon & Nigam 2007: 9). In sum, what differentiated him from previous Indian prime ministers, was 'opening of India to the world capitalist system, and […] preaching the virtues of private enterprise' (Metcalf & Metcalf 2006: 261). Further developments confirmed India's new path towards liberalizing economy. These came as direct consequences of economic crisis in 1991. It is believed (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008: 464–470) that certain features of the Indian model of economy brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy. First, (over)protection of local industries (import-substitution-industrialization) eventually led to their inefficiency, which was intensified by elaborate bureaucratic mechanisms. The preference, in certain areas, for small scale enterprises and setting the limits for their expansion, caused similar consequences. What is more, oversized bureaucracy and political demands, caused inefficiency of the large public sector. Adding to the above, was the problem of corruption. Second, it is claimed, India – despite the changing world trends of economic globalization – remained relatively closed for foreign investments and sceptical of export. The latter actually decreased from 2,4% in 1948 to 0,42% in 1980. Third, growing fiscal demands from various groups led to the 'abandoning of fiscal prudence since about the mid-1970s' and, in consequence, 'long term and structural in character' macroeconomic imbalance (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008: 470). Adding to the situation was the conflict in Kuwait, which bumped prices of oil and negatively affected Indian export to the Middle East. Regardless of whether one agrees with the reasons of a crisis drawn in this way, the fact remains that – despite GDP on a high level of 5.5% per year between 1985 and 1990 – India faced a debt problem by the end of the 1980s (up to 54.6% in 1989–1990). In 1990–1991 foreign exchange reserves were sufficient to cover imports for only one month and later on, and in July 1991 – for two weeks (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008: 473–474). The country's GDP in 1991–1992 dropped to 0.8% (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008: 477). Answering the crisis the government of Narashima Rao, established in 1991, initiated economic reforms by:

'[…] making the exchange rate more realistically linked to the market […]; liberalization of trade and industrial controls like freer access to imports; a considerable

dismantling of the industrial licensing system and the abolition of the MRTP Act; reform of the public sector including gradual privatization; reform of the capital markets and the financial sector; removing a large number of the restrictions on multinational corporations and foreign investment and welcoming them, particularly foreign direct investments, and so on'. (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008: 477)

Opinions about these reforms, their causes and consequences differ from Right to Left of the political scene. While some might argue that the scope of liberalization was not sufficient, the others might describe them as too complex or not necessary at all – a sign of surrender to international capital (represented by International Monetary Fund and World Bank) which conditions financial support for government-in-crisis on implementing structural adjustment programmes. However, we should ask the question: how these reforms influenced the boom of the third sector in India? It is argued that the collapse of the Nehruvian consensus[25] which occurred between 1989 and 1992 changed the nature of the Indian model of development as deregulation and decentralization include this sphere as well. In other words:

'The economic liberalization and structural adjustment programs which most developing nations have now adopted due to donor pressure, require reduced expenditure by the state on public services'. (Sen 1999: 329)

The state attempts to withdraw its welfare functions and therefore, prefers to delegate – by increasing availability of funds, both national and foreign[26] – development missions to non-governmental organizations (see e.g. Sharma 2008; Kilby 2011: 9–10). Certain features of Indian political and legal systems, such as governmental 5-year plans which define the role of NGOs as assistive and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, heavily influence the autonomy of Indian NGO sector. Thus, the assumption of complete privatization of state functions would be premature. However, the boom of third sector organizations remains a fact.

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[25] Nehruvian consensus is a term for the course of politics that India followed in post-independence period. It consists of 'a vision of self-reliant economy based on an import-substituting industrialization strategy; a broadly secular policy; and a non-aligned foreign policy that not only steered clear of international military alliances but was also anti-imperialist, especially vis-à-vis the USA, even if inconsistently so' (Menon & Nigam 2007: 3).

[26] The interesting example here might be the boost of funds after announcing Millennium Development Goals (Dongre & Goplan 2008).

THE SCOPE OF FIELDWORK

As I mentioned above, I suspected that – at least partially – my problems with establishing an internship in a non-governmental organization were caused by a lack of cultural competences (such as an ability to dress adequately), personal traits and differences of social and economic status between me and my potential respondents. Although I considered myself middle class, and even aspired for its higher ranks through my academic career-to-be, I could not compare to the Indian ladies that I came across on my way.[27] Therefore, coming back to India in 2011, I decided to present a more professional image. The first of these adjustments did not pose a particular problem – I was more experienced and mature by then, and therefore, I did not find an encounter with India so overwhelming as during my previous stays. What is more, I had found myself a 'proper' address in the southern neighbourhoods of Addi, considered to be middle class enclaves.[28] I was also determined to wear Indian clothes and delicate makeup, especially after one of my respondents whom I met at the beginning of my stay strongly encouraged me to do so.[29] I developed a professional resume highlighting skills which could be used by potential organizations. I decided that there was no need to disclose those personal details which – during my previous stays – were not lightly accepted by my respondents.[30] Finally, to counteract potential questions about the status of my relationship and avoid the possibility of stigma related with being an unmarried woman travelling alone, I introduced myself as a married person whose husband was about to join.[31] I cannot determine with certainty that these changes helped me in securing an internship position. My belief on the extent and scope that it influenced the course of my fieldwork is ultimately only a guess. It mostly reflects my own perceptions of India and its society. Obviously trying to fit the image of my potential respondents was not only prejudicial to some extent, but also might have proved fruitless. However, to describe my respondents' attitude towards me: in the organization I was placed somewhere between the interns

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[27] In addition, my assumptions were confirmed by foreign acquaintances with previous experiences in NGOs sector in India.

[28] For more on Addi slums vs. affluent neighbourhoods in Indian metropolises see i.e. Anne Waldrop (Waldrop 2004).

[29] 'Anna, you should get yourself normal clothes!' – I was told.

[30] Eventually I shared these experiences with my closest friends.

[31] I considered it to be a merely rhetorical trick, as my partner of the time actually joined me after a few months. Nevertheless, it shows the way in which I perceived my respondents.

(who differed in a few traits I used to differ during my first visits to India) and Indians.[32] These might have been due to my 'adjustments', but might also have been because of my personal traits, relatively better experience in India or my interlocutors' curiosity as I belonged to Poland – a 'second world country', as opposed to the majority of other interns who were from 'the West'.[33]

Nevertheless, initially even 'well-thought' attire did not move my search of a field site forward.[34] A colleague whom I met during a scholarship at Central European University in Hungary recommended to me a few organizations she interacted or interned with. She gained the majority of her experience in the Women's Foundation[35], although I was told not to refer to her while searching for some opportunities there, as her experience was not entirely pleasant, either for her or for the organization. As it was not a very encouraging recommendation, I first emailed another ex-worker of this NGO – Neha. She was pictured as someone approachable and nice. I got a response very quickly: Neha was just registering her organization – Shakti – with the Ministry of Home Affairs and she would love to have me 'on board'. I asked her about possible future references and after her positive response I remained equally positive. I was promised an insightful view into the organization's life – what else could I ask for? Actually, the issues her organization worked on were not a perfect match: her main focus was on fighting prostitution in a small community on the outskirts of Addi. Nevertheless, considering my previous lack of luck, I decided to strike while the iron was hot. Neha, in her forties when I met her, had an impressive experience in working in the field of women's rights with special emphasis on sex trafficking and prostitution. At that time, she had worked as a consultant at the Ministry of Women and Child Development. She, however, did not appreciate the pressure of working there. What is more, she felt committed to the community she worked for previously and wanted to start her own organization in the area as soon as

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[32] I was, for example, described to guests visiting our organization as 'This is Anna. She is the only one who knows how to dress like an Indian'.

[33] More on these issues in chapter 4.

[34] Somehow ground-breaking were my contacts with MAMTA (original name) which I got to know about from a Professor of Addi University. With her recommendation, I was able to establish a contact in this organization. Paperwork and various misunderstandings about it took over a month after which it occurred that – whether because of actual difficulties or lack of will to cooperate – my internship in this organization did not work out.

[35] Names of organizations and individuals from whom I acquired information are changed in order to protect their and their employees' privacy.

possible. As a representative of the Women's Foundation, she initiated a few programmes in this community. However, all of them, as she later learnt, were abandoned by this organization. From what she claimed it seemed that she could not stand the disappointment of people from the community and wished to fill this gap. Devoted to keeping operational what was once started, she revitalized English classes for children in (pre)school age, hired a teacher to teach them other subjects (like Maths and Geography). Neha paid a salary to the teacher who was from the community. She was also committed to pay electricity bills for a community centre (where lessons were conducted and people could gather for various events).

   For the next two and a half months, I was her right hand. I took part in all the activities mentioned above. I visited children from the community during English lessons, always greeted with a loud 'Good morning'. I designed and co-conducted trainings and workshops for girls and women about empowerment. I recorded audio and video materials. I wrote minutes from our brainstorming meetings where we decided on goals and a mission for the organization (formally: an organization-to-be). I helped to choose the logo for the organization. I was responsible for conducting needs assessment among the women in the community. I helped with fundraising (and Neha felt she could even organize fundraising meetings at my home). I coordinated volunteers. I was to take notes and organize Neha's – often ambiguous – ideas. I closely cooperated with a community leader, Rahul, who was also an unpaid programme coordinator of Shakti; at the same time, he ran his own organization in the very same community and, interestingly, was a previous employee of the Women's Foundation. I met the staff of other organizations working in the area as well, in order to make sure what activities had already been undertaken. Among them, Kunal, the President of Health for All who focused on HIV/AIDS (although, as he admitted, there was not such a problem in the community; but what if there would be?) and an organization of college students who, from time to time, organized theatre performances (the one I saw was about the importance of education) for children in the community. The exception was the staff from the Women's Foundation, the organization that my friend from Budapest, Neha and – as he initially claimed – Rahul had all had bad experiences with.

   Most importantly, Neha and I became friends, in a way that I had imagined a 'real' anthropologist made friendships. She used to come to my home almost every day after work in the Ministry, and we would spend many evenings talking about the organization-to-be. In the weekends, we either visited the community, met potential sponsors or sat in my apartment, eating delicious

food, drinking mango *lassi*[36] and, obviously, talking. The stronger my attachment to Rahul and Neha, the more they discouraged me from any cooperation with the Women's Foundation. They revealed details about their engagement with this organization and they were convinced that its leader was a 'fraud' and a 'witch'. Even if I wanted to expand my research, I felt that contacting the Women's Foundation would be a betrayal. I did not want to be disloyal towards my new friend. Firstly, in light of my previous traumatic experiences, I valued the safety of having 'real' friends too much to let them down. Secondly, the issue of developing 'friendship' with my interlocutors is again a perfect example of how my ambitions to join the anthropologists' community and reveal 'the truth' about the mechanisms of our societies (vide: to aspire to join the ranks of the middle class), ultimately stopped me from expanding my research.

At the same time, there was a bureaucratic obstacle preventing me from completing my fieldwork. My biggest hope in resolving the issue was, obviously, my friend, Neha. She occured to be of no help. Neha's anger and disappointment grew – I was not able to spend 12 hours every day working on her project. My anger and disappointment at her lack of support also grew. Our paths diverged under very unpleasant circumstances and I left for Poland. I came back to India after almost two months. Rahul was the one who, with Neha no longer in sight, suggested that I should contact the Women's Foundation. Unchained from loyalty obligations and fuelled by yet another opportunity to complete my fieldwork, I waited no longer and applied for an internship with this organization. I was accepted after a short interview and stayed with the Women's Foundation from September 2011 to February 2012.

Founded in 2002, the Women's Foundation has emerged over the years as one of the leading Indian NGOs dedicated to fight human trafficking and prostitution.[37] Its leader, Pryianka, was widely recognized in global feminist circles and prestigiously awarded. The Women's Foundation presented itself as a grassroots organization started in another Indian metropolis red-light area[38], later registered in the United States as well. Unfortunately, according to Pryianka's account, all 22 women in prostitution – founders of this NGO – died. She was the only one who remained alive. The Women's Foundation organized its work around a model of development which consisted of

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[36] Yoghurt-based fruit drink.
[37] Both organizations, Shakti and the Women's Foundation, considered sex work as sex trafficking. More on this issue see chapter 5.
[38] According to some accounts, it was founded in 1998.

learning, legal protection and livelihood.[39] In Addi, they not only worked with the same community as Shakti, but also encompassed more communities (in the same area, as well as in other states of India) who faced similar problems. The organization ran the community centres, sewing, tailoring, computer and English classes, as well as workshops about empowerment. Although the Women's Foundation has its field offices in a few Indian cities, I decided to focus only on the head office in Addi.

The latter, located in a prestigious colony of south Addi, constituted two upper floors of a family building. The lower floor was used by the President of the organization as her private apartment and therefore, other employees were able to make use of it only with her permission.[40] It was cozy, clean, and tastefully decorated: books, sofa, comfortable armchairs, glass tables – all of these in a spacious drawing room, from which one would enter a balcony, with flowers and garden chairs. One of the bedrooms – located on a higher level than the rest of the apartment – was temporarily transformed into an office for the President's assistant. Another one, to the left of the entrance door, served for guests or as a private suite in case of Pryianka's visit in Addi. In addition, the suite was equipped with two bathrooms and a small kitchen. What is more, there was a person hired to keep the flat neat and clean, even while Priyanka was away. In comparison, the upper floor, where the 'proper' office was located, seemed a bit rough. Opening the sliding entrance door, one could see quite ordinary-looking office space and most probably the first person to meet was a receptionist whose desk was located to the left – and later – in front of it. Further on the left, one would see a door to the room where office desks of programme and communication officers and accountants were located. The arrangement of desks was being constantly changed as the room was not spacious enough for so many people.[41] In between, there were shelves loaded with books and the organization's materials. Through the middle of this room, a path led to the kitchen, located just behind it. The kitchen itself was rather shabby[42] and small, designated mainly for the office's boy and for the employees, heating up their lunches occasionally. Coming back to the entrance door, to its right, one would see a conference room with

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[39] Source: organization materials.

[40] Sometimes granted for weeks, sometimes for days, sometimes for chosen individuals. The apartment had to be ready for Pryianka's (or her guests') possible visit in Addi and therefore was maintained by a servant.

[41] I remember, for example, vivid discussions whether 'American' or 'British' office set up would be preferable.

[42] Such difference between kitchen and the rest of a space is not unusual.

a glass table in the middle, and office chairs surrounding the table. This room served also as the interns' working space, the organization's library and dining room. Opposite, on a slightly higher level, the offices of the senior managerial employees were located: some desks situated in a passage leading to the ladies' bathroom (the men's restroom was located behind the main entrance), and some in an area separated with a glass door. Between this space and a conference room, was a small corridor leading to the balcony's door. One would pass glass shelves with materials about the organization (reports and so on), a computer station usually used by one of the interns and an office boy, and a copy-printing machine, to reach the balcony with a greenery view. In this office space, we met every day to pursue the daily activities of the organization. The Women's Foundation exercised an elaborate reporting structure[43] and each employee (both paid and unpaid) was assigned a position in a different division: Programmes, Monitoring & Evaluation, Communications & Networking or Accountancy. Under the supervision of the Programmes, I was mainly responsible for a research project, the main goal of which was to establish definitions of vulnerability, marginalization, and empowerment. From time to time – as the interns' flexibility seemed to be larger than the regular employees' – I was also able to support the division of Communications & Networking.

CLASS ANALYSIS: CONTRIBUTION

Before I pass on previous work on the topic and the contribution that this book brings, I should probably mention a few influences which led to the decision of encompassing my research within the chosen theoretical framework. First of all, there was my study visit in 2010 at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, where anthropology of leftist sentiment flourished. This stay gave me an initial inspiration to search for this kind of explanation modes while back at my home Department in Poznań. Secondly, during the period of my research in India, the academic (as the popular one was visible from the early 1990s[44]) dispute about the middle

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[43] See chapter 3.

[44] One of the examples of this debate are the books of Pavan K. Varma (2007), first published in 1997, which aggravated public debate on the changing nature of the Indian middle classes and their loss – in comparison with Nehruvian times – of compassion and responsibility towards poorer strata of society.

class and the ideological power of this group, after the decline, started to raise its head. During the fieldwork in Addi I followed my plans and kept looking for the 'clash of ideas' or translations mentioned above. It was after completing this phase that I decided to analyze my fieldwork information around the notion of middle class and its involvement in development projects.[45] It is so often heard that middle class members occupy job positions in non-governmental organizations that a statement of this kind seems to be self-explanatory. However, I share the view that the main task of socio-cultural anthropology is to explore the commonsense and trace its contradictions.

Therefore, I found my respondents' self-identification as members of the middle class interesting. On the other hand, why does the idea of a middle class person working in NGO seem so obvious? One of the reasons might be the historical participation and contribution of the members of this class to development projects. Actually, the emergence of a new middle class – in opposition to landed classes – in the pre-independence period co-existed with intensified efforts towards modernization and uplift of women's status in the society. In chapter 2, I combine various historical accounts to show the ways of middle class organizing and emphasize the role that this class had undertaken as a leader towards modernity. This synthesis, however, has its shortcomings – caused mainly by the difficulty of precise and homogenous definitions of organization and middle class as they varied and evolved with time and geographical location. As the goal of this study is contemporary rather than historical analysis, I restrict myself to provide a definition of present-day NGO as I encountered it during my research. Following this lead, in chapter 3, I examine mechanisms that might enable middle class members to obtain this particular kind of job (chapter 3). Are there any means in contemporary NGO work environment which facilitate entry to and promotion within NGOs according to class membership? In chapter 3, I argue that professionalization of third sector organizations (Alvarez 1999) plays such a role. Economic liberalization and structural adjustment policies not only lead, as it was shown above, to proliferation of this type of organizations, but also give preference to particular cultural capital – in possession of middle class members. My arguments rest on points of entry to organizations (requirements one has to

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[45] Here, I should thank the Ph.D. students who participated in the write-up seminar of Dr. Rabinowitz which I attended at Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology. It was in this seminar that it was pointed out to me that my attempts to illustrate the fluidity of processes had failed. Thanks to that I have found courage and an inspiration to what became the final version of this book.

meet to become an NGO professional). I argue that, partially because of obviousness and self-explanatory assumptions, but also because of the decline of class analysis, issues on the axis of the middle class and women's development have not been adequately explained.

Class has been an important mode of explanation on the Indian subcontinent until it lost its strength in the post-liberalization period (Deshpande 2003: 125). Although some scholars, such as Andre Beteille (1989; 1992) and Satish Deshpande (1997; 2003), continued to emphasize its importance, the overall decline was noticeable. In the 1990s, categories such as 'race, gender and ethnicity' were prevalent (Deshpande 2003: 125). One of the reasons for the relative absence of the category of class, which seems to be of significance in case of Indian anthropology and sociology[46] is the emphasis on caste as a – to some extent unique – feature of Indian culture and society (Beteille 2007), especially after the publication of the monumental *Homo Hierarchicus* (Dumont 1970). In a similar manner, Vivek Chibber associates the fall of class analysis in this period with the rise of post-structural and postcolonial modes of explanation within the Left. As he notes, the theoretical decline of class analysis was accompanied by a political one: with the collapse of the Soviet Union and, therefore, triumph of free market economy, the broadly discussed theoretical shortcomings of Marxist theory – considered to be a cradle of class analysis – were reinforced by political factors (Chibber 2006; 2008; 2013). This correlation was also noticed[47] by Satish Deshpande:

> 'Since then [its proliferation in 70s and 80s], the collapse of socialism and the broader disarray of Marxism as a political philosophy and a social scientific perspective have made the riches-to-rags story seem so self-evident that it tends to be taken for granted.' (Deshpande 2003: 125)

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[46] Andre Beteille notices that as a result of anthropology's involvement in colonialism, in post-independence India sociology covers areas which in European context are perceived as social anthropology.

[47] See also Rina Agarwala and Ronald Herring for explanation about the links between the decline of class theory in South Asian studies and introducing economic liberalization for similar arguments. 'It seems especially odd that so obvious a tool for explaining differentiation of life chances, as well as political dynamics that have so often historically developed from moral outrage at inequality, should wither in contemporary South Asia. Some obfuscation is transparently instrumental: it is in the interest of winners in booming economies – and regimes seeking credit for growth – to emphasize aggregate gains, not class divisions. […] In the dominant legitimization of global market integration, functionalist accounts held suppression of labour to be necessary for competitiveness. Class divisions were viewed as dysfunctional for national success' (Agarwala & Herring 2008: 4).

However severe was the decline of class theory in South Asian studies, it seemed more striking in the context of the middle class as in the 1990s – along with economic liberalization – it became a 'celebrity' of public discourse. Once again, Satish Deshpande shows several factors for this state of affairs.

'This anomaly is partly explained by the fact that the middle class has been a traditional blind spot for both Marxist-left wing and liberal-mainstream theory. The former has treated it as an acute theoretical "embarrassment" (Wright 1985: 13) or a "swamp" of ambiguity (Lefebvre 1976: 25), while the latter has tended to "naturalize" it by uncritically adopting its world view. A peculiarly Indian factor may also have been at work: the middle class may have seemed an 'unworthy' or self-indulgent topic for a generation of social scientists drawn from this class, who believed that their mandate was to act on behalf of "the people" who constituted the nation.' (Deshpande 2003: 128)

In the early 1990s, the account of the successful middle classes was provided by the economists who emphasized their importance as a neoliberal transformation bandwagon. Such accounts emerged and/or accompanied the need of policy makers to present India as a growing market with a huge purchasing capacity and was accompanied in public discourse with an enthusiastic and congratulatory tone for the Indian middle class. Therefore, in public discourse, both national and abroad, the middle class was in its triumph:

'Proponents of liberalization – and market research firms – have been preoccupied with assessments of the size of middle class and its potential as an untapped consumer market. In the early 1990s, a time of euphoria over the potential of India's consuming classes, public discourses routinely referred to India's 200-million-strong middle class as a resource that could automatically be mobilized to consume.'[48] (Fernandes 2011: 69)

Even if the middle class consumerist capacity has been overestimated, nevertheless, its drive to consumerism and modern life style remains a valid element of their identity building (Fernandes 2011: 69). In the 2000s one could easily see a proliferation of studies in social sciences with the middle class at its centre: anthropological accounts which emerged in response to the growing significance of this class, confirm this observation (e.g. Saavala 2010; Vanaik 2002; Dickey 2012; Donner 2011; Mazzarella 2003; Mathur 2010; Baviskar & Ray 2011;

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[48] Others refer to 300 million Indian middle class (i.e. Deshpande 2003: 134).

Harriss 2006; Fernandes 2006; 2011; Deshpande 2003; Agarwala & Herring 2008; Joshi 2001; Jeffrey, Jeffrey & Jeffrey 2004; Kumar 2011). What is more, in the early 1990s the middle class was believed to lead not only in the economic, but also in the political arena. In the latter, it was seen as a moderator of social and political conflicts (Baviskar & Ray 2011: 3). This account has been dismissed on closer investigation (most notably by Harriss 2006; on the political role of the middle classes see also Fernandes 2006; 2011). As I mentioned, 2000s saw a significant increase in the middle class studies and many of them (especially Baviskar & Ray 2011; Deshpande 1997; 2003; Agarwala & Herring 2008) obviously bring inspiration to this book as well. Despite the studies on middle class identities, (non)political modes of action (Harriss 2006) or their formation in colonial times (Joshi 2010; Baviskar & Ray 2011), the situation looks quite different when it comes to (post)development studies. One of the reasons might be the decline of development-as-ideology as such. Although in Nehruvian times it constituted an important site of middle class identification, emphasized and legitimized their responsibility in nation-building, it discontinued playing this role and disappeared from public discourse after economic liberalization (Deshpande 1997). Therefore, the relative growth of (middle) class analysis in the 2000s is not necessarily reflected in post-development studies. This tendency might also be seen as a result of the main focus in this (sub)field: the poor.[49] It is reasonable to assume that scholars, themselves part of a privileged community of the world, have certain obligations of giving an adequate (to the possible extent) representation of the less privileged (Deshpande 2003; Mosse 2005). Although in recent years scholars undertook the issue of professionals in development (e.g. Lewis & Mosse 2005; Lewis & Mosse 2006; Mosse 2005; Hindman & Fechter 2010; Jakimow 2012; Heaton Shrestha 2006), they focused mainly on (re)creation of ideas or (identity) categories other than class, rather than the issue of class itself.

This study attempts to fill this gap. How and why is development used by the middle class in contemporary India? What does the middle class involvement tell us about the nature of development? In chapter 5 I examine the role of empowerment – an important ingredient of development orthodoxy (Sharma 2008), and the ways it is being negotiated in everyday organizations' practices. I argue that empowerment is an element of creating middle class identity. In a similar manner, I look at the meaning being given to sex work and prostitution (chapter 4). I stress that the image of sex worker/prostitutes (and a whole community of beneficiaries) as painted by the organizations

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[49] As it was seen in regard to the issues of social class.

and its employees results in creating the homogenous 'Other' based on class distinctions. As in chapter 5 I examine empowerment in its bureaucratic attire, in chapter 6 I move to the political dimension of empowerment. Does an organization's outreach by advocacy and concrete activities in the field contribute to the (re)production and consumption of ideologies (Deshpande 2003)? If development is a political project, whose politics is it? Can development be a part of the transnational middle classes' politics (Lawson 2011)?

A FEW METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REMARKS

In this chapter, I tried to reveal to the reader the research process in the same way as it revealed to me. Neither research processes, nor findings adjust to careful planning. One of the things that remained untouched during this journey was my firm belief in participant observation as an 'ontological commitment' of anthropology (Ingold 2014).[50] Obviously, the tradition of participant observation has outstanding roots in anthropology and is often considered to be an inevitable part of fieldwork, both being distinctive characteristics of this discipline. Actually, this belief turned out to be a practical obstacle in finding the field site. Participant observation requires a researcher to immerse herself into the lives of her interlocutors, to be a part of the group studied. I involved myself in the everyday lives of organizations and followed their employees to their homes (both for relaxation and working from home), spent free time together (on their holidays, in the evenings at restaurants, or even days in beauty parlours, salons and shopping). However, even during the course of my research I found that there was some information about them which was difficult to acquire through participant observation. Thus, I used other techniques as a supplementary. In practical terms, I found it useful to ask certain questions in an environment set up as an interview, especially questions regarding their career paths, education details or opinions on various phenomena of the contemporary world. Some of the answers were easier to gather through a survey, therefore I applied this technique as well. As a reason for conducting a survey among the Women's Foundation's employees I suggested the necessity of creating a unified standpoint on empowerment, vulnerability and marginalization (based on the employees' experience and knowledge

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[50] Not only was participant observation better suited to my research goals. I also looked to meet my ambitions of becoming a 'real anthropologist', and I strongly believed that participant observation, as allowing for a more insightful view, is a 'real anthropologist's' method.

about prostitution) in order to improve the programmes implemented in the field.[51] The results were, however, interpreted in a qualitative way: as part of the information to be further explored during the interviews. In this way I was also able to gather complex data on the employees' age, religion, family and economic status, etc., which helped me to confirm what I had already learnt thanks to observation and informal conversations. What is more, I also composed a unique collection of the organization's documents, including curriculum resumes, internal notes, meeting minutes, reports, descriptions of programmes, blogs, beneficiary database, business plans, organograms, contracts with various donors and service providers, etc.[52]

I intend to introduce my research within a chosen methodological approach: the extended case method as it is understood[53] by Micheal Burawoy and his students (1991; 2000), probably the most known popularisers of this methodology (Small 2009: 20). For consistency, I choose to model my arguments within their framework, although by no means do I dismiss other proponents of this approach.[54] Furthermore, I give an account of the field site to provide the reader with a context of my study. I describe not only the organizations I worked with, but I place them in wider social, economic and historical backgrounds in order to fulfil another methodological requirement: 'extension of observations over time and space' (Burawoy 1991; 2000). I attempt to see one's situation as embedded in social processes. I am particularly interested not in the static picture of single communities, but in the processes and mechanisms which drive contemporary societies (see also: Lamont & White, quoted in Small 2009: 22). In a globalized world no group – in this case a group of professionals working for non-governmental organizations – can be perceived without mutual interconnections, their influence on people's daily lives and local–global dimensions which embrace each other. I agree that anthropological studies should 'lead […] directly to analysis of domination and resistance' (Burawoy 1991: 279). Therefore, I also aim to study external

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[51] It was one of the tasks which I was assigned to in the organization.

[52] This created an ethical issue, as even though technically I was granted an access to all of these documents, not all of them were published. I changed the names of people and organizations in order to protect their privacy, I also describe the content of those documents rather than quote them.

[53] Certainly, I apply a few modifications in the belief that the field dictates our actions during fieldwork and the ultimate goal is to collect the most complex and accurate data to answer the research questions.

[54] Most notably Max Glukhman and the Manchester school, as well as Clyde Mitchell and Jaap van Velsen. Michael Burawoy himself claims that he was introduced to extended case method as a student of Jaap van Velsen and therefore the latter is owed much of the glorification this method receives nowadays (see: Burawoy 1991: 325).

(macro) forces as demonstrated in 'micro situation' (Burawoy 1991: 277). In other words, it is '*extending out from micro processes to macro forces*, from the space – time rhythms of the site to the geographical and historical context of the field' (Burawoy 2000: 27, italics original). The fourth (and last) ingredient of extended case method is the 'extension of theory' (Burawoy 2000), which I attempted to achieve by pointing to the ways in which my research adds to existing studies in class theory and post-development studies.

Last but not least, I believe that it is necessary to mention some ethical issues that emerged during my work (even if a few of them were already highlighted on the previous pages). Adding my perception of contemporary matters and a few earlier readings, working in this organization was an ethical puzzle for me. I did not really believe in the effectiveness of any activities performed by the organization. Truly outraging – as after the assault which I mention in the beginning of the chapter I became particularly sensitive towards women's agency – was the employees' perception of the community of beneficiaries. Various evidence of women in prostitution as agents of their fate were being dismissed or dissolved in the organization's work. I found it really tempting to trace, describe and publicize all the dark sides and misuses of NGOs. There are two reasons why I finally decided not to. First, after interacting with the people whom I met in the organization and after befriending a few of them, I am not convinced about their 'evil' motivations. Looking at their everyday struggles to 'make things work', I cannot just assume that they consciously involved themselves in noble activities only for personal benefits and out of greed. Second of all, I found myself working in the very same organization and involved in the very same activities out of personal benefits to me. I hope that the following pages will not be perceived as tossing a stone. I think that in the opinion of many, and even more often in the opinion of the employees of those organizations, their goals and acts are noble. I presume that they would most probably oppose what I have written here and claim that by no means might they be influenced by such 'egoistic' motivations as climbing up the social ladder. Just the opposite, for some people the notion of social work being not entirely selfless might not be anything new. Indeed, it is not. My goal hereby, however, is not to judge the actions of myself or my colleagues, but more to describe them in a chosen analytical framework.

Chapter 2

MIDDLE CLASSES ORGANIZING AROUND THE WOMEN'S QUESTION

'The Indian Women's Movement has hundreds of organizations but no single one can be called representative of it. Equally, there are no accepted prototypes.' (Gandhi & Shah 1999: 299)

FROM SOCIAL REFORMERS TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the fact that middle class members work in contemporary non-governmental organizations seems to be self-explanatory. Indeed, the middle class as a leader of advancement and development is not a new occurrence. The story of organizations I cooperated with is enmeshed into three interrelated phenomena: the middle class, women's issues and modernization/development. In this chapter I describe the ways in which, since its formation in colonial times, the middle class in India have been involved in women's rights associations. Thus their activities within contemporary NGOs come as hardly unanticipated. Rather, they come as a consequence of the significance of modernization (in colonial times) and development (post-independence) projects for both middle class identity and nation-building. Finally, one of the results of a shift in the meaning of development in the post-liberalization era was the evolution of non-governmental organizations to their contemporary form. The main goal of this brief overview is to provide a picture of concatenation between these processes and reveal historical roots and causes of middle class engagement in modernization/development with a special emphasis on women's issues.

However, achieving this goal poses a few obstacles which ultimately lead to obvious shortcomings of the following investigation. Firstly, there is an impossibility of establishing consistent definitions of organizations and the middle class through all historical periods, as heterogeneity of these entities makes it problematic to establish uniform definitions even today. Secondly, the variety of forms of organizing creates a necessity to limit some of them in this analysis.[1] The focus of my study is on contemporary issues in historical context and not on historical developments as such. Therefore rather than explaining these differences in particular historical periods, I use general terms of organizations, associations and social movements. I believe that this approach allows me to keep chronological order and to relate definitions to the fieldwork actuality to the fullest extent. Although I aim to focus on similar forms of organizations that I encountered during my fieldwork, the final selection must be arbitrary. Another shortcoming arises from a scarcity of sources depicting the issues I touch upon which would centre exclusively on Addi. As a result I am required to build on studies of other parts of India as well, or India as a whole.

COLONIAL ELITES AND 'THE WOMEN'S QUESTION'

Social reforms aimed at the improvement of women's situation constituted an important side of middle class formation in colonial times (Baviskar & Ray 2011: 4; Sarkar & Sarkar 2007). In order to understand how both these issues were intertwined, we must take a glance at the discourses about the women's question in 19th and early 20th century, as well as at the processes of formation of the new middle classes[2] in this period. Both were strongly related to colonial politics. On the one hand, by imposing English education, colonial rulers[3] aimed at raising a faction of collaborators for their imperial project, but this move resulted in far more complex consequences. Eventually, English education became a distinction of an emerging middle class in opposition to lower and landed classes (Fernandes 2006: 2–5). Although this new attribute offered certain benefits – for example, new employment opportunities in the government sector – the position of the Indian middle classes was nevertheless subordinated to the power of British rulers. As Leela Fernandes puts it:

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[1] Most notably I barely mention social movements.
[2] In opposition to traditional elites (Fernandes 2006; 2011: 63).
[3] Following the principles of indirect rule over occupied territories.

'The structural constraints of colonialism placed this newly emerging social group in a unique position of ambivalence that rested between the privileges and points of access that education provided and restricted access to economic and political power.' (Fernandes 2006: 5–6)

On the other hand, colonizers ensured their right to rule by enforcing a designation of themselves as 'civilized' – in opposition to 'uncivilized' territories and people they were 'entitled' to govern. Consequently, they argued, the 'civilizing mission' they acted upon was not only their right, but also a duty – a duty to unchain 'savage' societies from an overwhelming burden of their traditions (Forbes 2008; Chatterjee 1989).

'In identifying this [Indian] tradition as 'degenerate and barbaric', colonialist critics invariably repeated a long list of atrocities perpetrated on Indian women, not so much by men or certain classes of men, but by an entire body of scriptural canons and ritual practices which, they said, by rationalizing such atrocities within a complete framework of religious doctrine, made them appear to perpetrators and sufferers alike as the necessary marks of right conduct.' (Chatterjee 1989: 622)

Importantly, many Indian social reformers[4], paradoxically recipients of English education, agreed that women were mistreated, but if they blamed tradition and/or religion for this state of affairs, they would point at the modifications brought into Indian culture by foreign invasions. Muslim and Mughal rulers transformed what was once a real, glorious Indian tradition (to be traced in the Golden Ages between 4th and 6th centuries), which resulted in social evils so eagerly indicated by British colonizers. Those reformers believed that education and emancipation are the keys for uprooting women's discrimination out of the social system, and subsequent restoration of the 'authentic' social order. However, the British were also not considered as a role-model in terms of traditions, customs or religion – including status of women. In fact,

'the ideology that emerged to redefine gender relations was an amalgam of new foreign ideas, indigenous concepts, and the response of Indian men and women to the foreign presence in their midst.' (Forbes 2008: 14)

However on opposite sides of the barricade and in various ways, British colonizers and indigenous social reformers began their battles for women's rights.

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4   However, it is noted that there was no consensus on this issue (Forbes 2008: 14).

It is not my goal to argue that certain problems of women in the Indian sub-continent must have been resolved, but I believe that at the same time it is necessary to underline that these demands which have been undertaken remained mainly the concerns of the high caste and high/middle class. Consequently, other than raising awareness about '*sati*[5], female infanticide, polygyny, child marriage, *purdah*[6], prohibitions on female education, *devadasi* system[7] and the patrilocal joint family' (Forbes 2008: 19) and increasing access to education for women, the activities of colonial elites carried some other – ambiguous – outcomes. As Jana Marson[8] Everett notices, the imposition of high caste and class women's problems on other groups was encouraged while in 1772 Governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings,

> 'imposed the Brahmins' religious text as sole legal authority, in an attempt to make Hindu custom fit with British law, applying uniformly to everyone and based on the binding force of Parliamentary Acts interpreted according to precedent.' (Everett 1981, quoted in Liddle & Joshi 1985: 522)

Whereas the scope of Hindu customs differed in the context of various castes and regions, the same cannot be said about the British law which required uniformity (Everett 1981, quoted in Liddle & Joshi 1985: 522). As a result of building on concerns of middle class and high caste women, Indian social reformers – and later on women's associations – largely excluded issues concerning people from the lower strata of society (see Sarkar & Sarkar 2007: 8; Rai 2008: 26; Liddle & Joshi in the context of caste 1985: 522; Menon 1999: 5).

   Although the first pro-women's rights organizations were founded by men, women promptly joined them. This was possible thanks to a greater access to education for women, their higher spatial mobility and availability of printed materials (Forbes 2008; Sarkar & Sarkar 2007). Women's organizations also became an important part of the nationalist movement (Forbes 2008: 64) in the late 19th and the early 20th century, whereas the women's question remained a central point for the transformation of society and its modernization. Modern woman was to be educated and freed from social evils, while the latter were defined on the basis of middle and upper class

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[5] Widow immolation.
[6] Female seclusion.
[7] A practice of devoting girls before puberty to the temples where they are made sexually available to appropriate patrons.
[8] Probably as a result of editorial misspelling, the author is referred to as Jana Matson Everett.

experiences. What is more – according to the vision of early century reformers which was later carried on by nationalists (Forbes 2008: 15) – she was also a moral guardian of Indian traditions. This role was particularly significant. The reason for the British occupation, nationalists said, was their superiority in the material domain of culture, represented by the outside world of men. The other side of this dichotomy was the spiritual sphere – home, a woman's sole responsibility – and at the same time, a proof of Indian moral supremacy (Chatterjee 1989). As Partha Chatterjee explains:

> 'The new woman defined in this way was subjected to a new patriarchy. In fact, the social order connecting the home and the world in which nationalist placed the new woman was contrasted […] with that of modern Western society […]. The new patriarchy was also sharply distinguished from the immediate social and cultural condition in which the majority of people lived, for the "new" woman was quite the reverse of the "common" woman, who was coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males. Alongside the parody of Westernized woman, this other construct is repeatedly emphasized in the literature of the 19th century through a host of lower-class female characters who make their appearance in the social milieu of the new middle class – maidservants, washing women, barbers, peddlers, procuresses, prostitutes.' (Chatterjee 1989: 627)

Thus, the notion of the new, moral woman was constructed along the Eastern/Western divide, as well as along class lines. This also reflects apprehensions about the status of various categories of sex and entertainment workers as they were found to be representatives of immoral world, unsuited for a new Indian woman. At first social reformers concerned themselves with women who, by virtue of their caste, became involved in dancing and singing professions. Another group they targeted consisted of women who belonged to *baishnawa* sect[9] and practiced informal relations with men. Third, *devadasis*: women from certain castes who were trained in classical dances and made sexually available to an appropriate temple's patron. In exchange for these services, they entertained not only profit from the land granted to them, but also respect of their community. This state of affairs has been gradually changing since the 1870s, when social reformers targeted these practices as immoral and considered those women prostitutes. Last type of 'fallen women' were those who sold sex for any other reasons. Initially the British, later joined by

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[9] Devoted to Vishnu, more commonly known as *vaisnava*.

Indians, formed special kinds of associations in order to settle rescue homes for prostitutes (Forbes 2008: 181–188).[10]

Again, the growth of the indigenous middle class in later colonial periods corresponded with intensified struggles for women's emancipation. Flourishing associations gathered wealthy, high caste and middle (or high) class women and men who could devote their time and effort to support the idea of a new woman.[11] They[12] voiced concerns and 'recreated' Indian tradition in opposition to the colonial state, but at the same time 'the specificities of the colonial rule both shaped and intensified the significance of the rise of educated middle classes' (Fernandes 2011: 63). The critique of women's position in Indian society was addressed via language of common communication – English; the two groups were able to conduct the debate in similar conceptual framework. The ambitions of middle class members to represent women overlapped with their ambitions and claims to represent the whole society in the public arena (Fernandes 2011: 63). It is important to note, however, that it was the independence dream, not emancipation, that led to the broad women's movement (Forbes 2008). According to Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, women's participation in the freedom movement was to a great extent attributable to Mahatma Gandhi. He not only aimed at mass public involvement, but believed that women possess the ability to self-sacrifice which makes them more suitable to execute the rules of non-violence than men (Liddle & Joshi 1985: 524–525). After his return to India in 1915, Gandhi met with a group of middle class women to discuss poverty of the rest of society. He stressed that the Indian woman should act like Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi, ancient heroines eager to sacrifice their lives for their husbands' well-being (Forbes 2008: 124; Menon 1999: 9–10). Gandhi invited women to join his political movement. The idea of production of native *khaddar*[13], aimed at gaining economic independence from the British empire, was based very often on women's work (Menon 1999: 11). At the same time, Gandhi assured their male guardians (fathers, husbands and brothers) that women's conduct in the public sphere would

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[10] The institution of *devadasi* and other were strongly opposed and eventually banned in 1947. Indian tradition was, again, to be blamed for the 'evil' of all kinds of prostitution, although it should be noted that women associated with Communist Party recognized that one of the reasons for prostitution was poverty (Forbes 2008: 181–188).

[11] See also Sarkar & Sarkar (2007) for a critique of the privileged position of this group.

[12] As Geraldine Forbes (2008: 20) underlines, social reformers of 19th century anchored their activities in the reality of their closest social circles.

[13] Known also as *khadi*, a cloth homespun by hand.

not negatively affect their families' honour, if directed towards the Indian independence. Moreover, women were a part of Indian National Congress, however their appearance, at least at the end of the 19th century and at the very beginning of the 20th century, was mainly decorative and symbolic.[14] In 1905 women protested against the partition of Bengal by buying *swadeshi*[15] products and in this way – boycotting goods made in foreign countries (Forbes 2008: 123).

The other reason for encouraging mass participation of women rested on the incorporation, for the very first time, of the working-class and peasant women into the national movement's activities. In the 1930s a growing interest in radical feminism and Marxism significantly transformed the scope of the women's movement concerns by touching upon inequalities inherent to the patriarchal system and everyday struggles of working class women (Forbes 2008; Rai 2008). A 'more-encompassing' dimension was also noticeable in the establishing, after the First World War, of three national organizations: the Women's Indian Association, the National Council of Women in India and the All India Women's Conference (Forbes 2008: 72). However, it is recognized that the leadership of the women's movement belonged to the urban middle and upper classes (Desai 2008: 24; Forbes 2008: 357; Rai 2008: 28). Similar processes – elites gaining dominance in nationalist movements – took place in most countries fighting for independence in the 20th century (Rai 2008: 28). The vigour of cooperation with the Congress weakened since the election of 1937, when women candidates were disappointed with the lack of adequate support from its leaders.[16] Following the pre-election period, the Congress, faced with demands from various groups of society, gradually put women's issues aside from the centre of its politics (Forbes 2008). In 1939 a sub-committee of the National Planning Committee was established in order to

'review(ing) the social, economic, and legal status of women and suggest(ing) measures to make equality of status and opportunity a possibility in the planned economy of free India.' (Forbes 2008: 199)

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[14] With a few notable exceptions of that time (i.e. Kadambini Ganguly, the first Indian female medical doctor, and delegate to Congress), women very often merely accompanied male members of their families (Forbes 2008).

[15] Made locally.

[16] Nevertheless, some of them were able to secure seats both in the General Assembly, as well as in provincial ones.

Consequently, the role of colonial economy as a reason for underprivileged women's position in society was emphasised. Moreover, the role of women as guardians of social traditions was equally stressed (Rai 2008: 28–29).

However inaccurate and sketchy it would be to draw any generalizations for the whole colonial period, it is significant that the authors cited above mentioned the middle class' involvement in projects concerned with the women's question in India. It should not be an overstatement to note that if any mistreatment of women was undertaken in colonial times, it came as a result of the British condemnation of Indian traditions and rituals. The retort to this account appeared within the new middle class which emerged as a direct consequence of introducing English education to the Indian elite. Thus, the women's question – including concerns about prostitutes' well-being and morality – depicts itself as an important part and side of not only national, but also middle class identity in the colonial period. The fact that it was members of the middle class who built their narratives of independence and Indian nation around women's problems, indicated two interconnected major developments. First, the vast part of women's problems indicated by social reformers and organizations were based on problems encountered by high caste and middle/upper class women. Second, the women's movement was not able to develop and consolidate within wider groups of women whom paradoxically it claimed to represent; at least not around women's issues which would concern all or a majority of them. The problems of working class women, in this instance, were largely overlooked and consequently ignored. Accordingly, the only issue which enabled the involvement of women from all strata of Indian society, was the issue of Indian independence. Although even then the leadership of the movement belonged to a privileged group of its members. Certainly, this social and political landscape shaped the scope of the women's movement in the post-independence era.

FROM NEHRUVIAN CONSENSUS TO ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION

We have already seen in the previous chapter that there has been a considerable growth of third sector organizations in India since the 1980s. We have also seen that the boom of non-governmental organizations in India corresponded with the policy change towards economic liberalization as 90% of TSOs[17] were registered after this shift (*Survey…* 2009: 8). This proliferation

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[17] Third sector organizations.

did not, obviously, exclude associations focusing on women's and development issues. The years immediately following independence through to the 1960s, however, saw a considerable stagnation in both practice and theory of the women's question. The following subsection provides a brief overview of the fall and rise of women's organizations with a special emphasis on the middle class in it. Drawing from their position achieved in colonial times, the middle classes undertook a leading role in the nation-building of independent India. However, as Leela Fernandes shows, the relation between state and these classes was multi-folded, thus:

> 'an analysis of this relationship between the state and middle classes does not rest on an assumption of a reductive equation between state and class interests or a theory of middle class capture of the state. Rather, such networks of patronage were produced through a dynamic set of political processes in which middle class groups actively made demands on the state and state institutions while local officials and politicians sought to consolidate power through these social groups. In this process, the state actively participated in the protection and expansion of the social basis of the middle classes (in this case, through the provision of particular of benefits and resources) as it sought to transform such middle class spaces into a terrain for the expansion and exercise of state power.' (Fernandes 2006: 22)

Moreover:

> 'These dependencies have not, however, meant that the middle class has been a passive recipient of state policy agendas. Rather, such segments of the middle class would actively make claims on the state.' (Fernandes 2006: 24)

The model of development adopted after independence continued to benefit the middle classes, whereas the pressure on rapid industrialization and modernization featured them as leaders of change. This was particularly relevant in relation to the higher education which – as a result of multifaceted pressures of various groups within this class, and the state's dependence on their members in designing and implementing policies and models of development – gathered more state financial support than primary schooling. At the same time, it also maintained its distinctive and reproductive role in the formation of these classes (Fernandes 2006: 20–24). For Satish Deshpande, development played the role of a nation-building ideology through which the middle class (re)created and exercised a 'moral privileging' where

they maintained 'managing developmental process on behalf of the nation' (Deshpande 1997: 301; 2003: 144). As we shall see below, this claim did not omit women's issues.

Comparative to the active role of women in the pre-independence period, the decline of the women's movement after 1947 might seem astonishing. However, there were a few reasons for this situation. Their common denominator was rooted in the position of middle class women who, as I mentioned, inherited the leadership of the movement from the pre-independence to post-independence period. They were the main beneficiaries of the development model carried on by the postcolonial state, and therefore relatively easily overlooked that their privileges did not grasp the lower classes of Indian society (Desai 2008: 24–25). First, equality of rights for men and women was included in the constitutional law of independent India and was followed by acts aimed at ending women's discrimination[18] which satisfied many activists' ambitions. Second, some women had already secured their positions in politics and were active actors on the political scene. Some women 'occupied other positions of power and social esteem'[19] (Desai 2008: 23). Finally, the general consensus of the welfare state was accompanied by the belief that the model of development by rapid industrialisation was to benefit the whole society eventually – including women (Desai 2008: 23; Deshpande 1997: 299). This corresponded to an opinion that the causes of women's problems were rooted not only in 'evil' social traditions[20], but also – if not firstly – in the exploitation of indigenous population through devastating practices of colonial economy (Forbes 2008). Since in 1953 the Central Social Welfare Board had been established as a major donor agency, many women's organizations depended on its funding. Consequently, and as some of the women activists cooperated with this governmental body, to a large extent its guiding principles influenced their policies and defined the scope of women's activism. Main focus was put on issues such as 'education, social welfare and health' (Desai 2008: 24).

> 'In short, the immediate impact of political freedom was the generation of hope and confidence among women regarding their future. There was no need, it was felt by many, of an active women's movement to press their demands.' (Desai 2008: 23)

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[18] The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, The Adoption Act 1956, The Succession Act 1956 (Forbes 2008: 377).
[19] The author does not specify these roles.
[20] These were to be cured by implementation of laws mentioned above.

It should also be noted, that the subsequent reluctance towards a closer examination of women's position in society might have been related to the specificity of Indian nationalism whilst the uniformity of nation (including men and women) and differences in comparison with Western feminism required to be emphasised (Chaudhuri 2011: xix). The unity of the newly independent nation remained a priority. Although providing education or health care might certainly be perceived as directed at the poorer strata of the Indian society, it was later recognized that the approach[21] established to counteract social problems did not recognize the role of women as active agents of development. As a consequence, it did not effectively work towards the betterment of these groups. Obviously, it would be impulsive to blame the Indian middle class for this failure. There is no evidence that its members deliberately focused on and pushed their own interests, deciding to abandon countrymen in need. As much as it is unjustified to claim that development failure[22] was a calculated middle class goal which effectively influenced government policies, it might be claimed that the decline of the women's movement and the lack of adequate women's studies contributed to subsequent malfunctions. What is more, this seemed consistent with broadly defined middle class interests.

The wake-up calls came in the 1970s, but they were followed by a complex critique of state policy, and by an increased activity in the women's movement. There were multifarious reasons for this shift. First, India found herself in a deep economic crisis. Indira Gandhi's military and political success in the 1971 Bangladesh war created a budget deficit. Added to the expenses of warfare, there was the cost of the necessary help for 10 million Bangladeshi refugees who fled to India as an immediate result of the war. What is more, the droughts in 1972 and 1973 caused grain scarcity and a decline in agricultural production, which in turn increased the prices of food. Subsequently, the agricultural crisis led to an industrial breakdown, so that many Indians faced unemployment. Additionally, following the oil shock in 1973, the prices of petroleum went up. A shortage of foreign reserves was another factor contributing to the economic crisis. Secondly, on the political scene, the Congress failed to provide a strong leadership as the party was in disarray. What is more, the picture of the whole situation became even more exacerbated due to the widespread accusations of corruption. Indian society became united in its anger against the ruling party and the latter's

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[21] More on this approach in subsequent parts of this chapter.
[22] Which anyway corresponded with a world-wide tendency.

inability to take necessary anti-crisis measures. The country witnessed food riots, strikes and demonstrations (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008: 311–313). This situation led to serious concerns about the adopted model of development and its consequences and questions about the ability of the Indian political elite to rule.

Another wake-up impulse came from international and national debates within women's studies and movements. The 1970s saw the beginning of women's movements around the globe (Tinker 2004: XIII). The decade between 1975 and 1985 was pronounced the United Nations Decade for Women (Jacquette & Staudt 2007: 19). The work of Ester Boserup (1970), who examined the status of women in the Third World, opened up a discussion about the influence of welfare-based development policies on women (Saunders 2002: 3–4). It was recognized that incorporating women into this development paradigm was based on their perception as passive receivers of development and

'further naturalized biologically deterministic notions of gender identities and roles and reinforced and essentialized hierarchy between productive and reproductive work.' (Sharma 2008: 4)

The new approach, named 'Women in Development' (WID), emerged as a result of this critique, and its proponents claimed that women should be recognized as active economic agents and their productivity should be appreciated through the implementation of income generating programs, micro-credits and emphasizing the need for equality in the fields of employment and education (Sharma 2008: 5). The shift on the international arena led to a closer examination of the situation of Indian women, thus in 1974 the Committee on the Status of Women published the report 'Toward Equality', which shed light on women's health, working conditions and involvement in politics (Desai 2008: 26). The findings of this document caused an outrage among women activists in India (Forbes 2008: 243) as it exposed the failure of the efforts undertaken by the state to uplift the position of women (Sharma 2008: 35). Therefore, the 1970s were a new era for the women's movement[23] in India

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23 I.e. United Women's Anti Price-Rise Movement in Maharashtra 1973, which later on linked with the student movement against corruption in Gujarat and further on became a 'massive [anti-state] middle class movement' (Menon 1999: 19). An important critique of women's status in India also took place within the Jayaprakash Narayan movement which became known in the early 1970s in Bihar and spread to other parts of the country (Sen 2011: 193). The Chipko movement of this time stressed the role of women as nature-carers (Sen 2011: 194–195). Self Employed Women's

and marked the so-called second wave of Indian feminism. Issues such as the employment conditions of rural women, but also alcoholism, domestic violence, practices of dowry and sexual harassment were brought to the fore (Desai 2008: 26). The number of organizations of both working, urban and middle class women increased (Menon 1999: 19). As Gail Omvedt notes, since 1975 and in the 1980s, women's organizations of different fronts and political orientations worked on issues such as anti-rape and anti-dowry deaths policies or Muslim women's rights. However, she also adds that:

> 'Conversely, there has so far been no sustained movement or campaign organized on issues such as equal wages and work for women agriculturers and urban toiling women, even though many left organizations have made these a theoretical priority.' (Omvedt 2011: 180)[24]

Indeed, public discourse about women and their status in the late 1970s and 1980s highlighted particular concerns, while the most pressing issues for the lower classes exclusively have not been undertaken. The campaign towards amendments of laws against rape initiated in 1978 as a consequence of a Supreme Court ruling which pronounced the policemen accused of rape on a 14 or 16-year-old tribal girl in 1972 in Maharashtra innocent (the Mathura case). The movement received a further boost from other rape cases in two consecutive years: of the 18-year-old working class Muslim Rameeza Bee in Andhra Pradesh, and the 25-year-old middle class Maya Tyagi in Haryana (Gangoli 2007: 79–85; Sen 2011: 196). The case of Shah Bano, who in the mid-1980s demanded in court a maintenance from her ex-husband, opened a nation-wide debate about Muslim women's rights and the applicability of unified civil law to all Indians, regardless of their religion (Gangoli 2007: 38–41; Sen 2011: 198). Another issue which sparked women's activists since the early 1980s was domestic violence. In North India, the special emphasis in this area was put on dowry demands and their consequences (such as murder in the most extreme cases), while in other parts of the country, particularly in Mumbai, the latter was seen rather as a part of the domestic

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Association (SEWA), which ultimately separated from its cradle, Textile Labour Association, aimed at the empowerment of women in the unorganized sector (Sen 2011: 195). All of these movements counteracted, among others, the development policy of the state (Sen 2011: 195).

[24] It is important to stress that there is no united stance among Marxist feminists on the issues which should be represented by women's movements as well. Some of them claim that while women's organizations should limit themselves to the problems concentrating solely on women, the issues with influence on wider society ought to be undertaken.

violence problem (Gangoli 2007: 99). The *sati*[25] committed by Roop Kanwar in 1987 in Rajashtan intensified the efforts against this practice (Sen 1999: 197). The question of prostitution materialized again within the *devadasi* abolition movement in the 1970s and 1980s but it received more support from the *Dalit* than the women's movement (Tambe 2008: 89–90). It was claimed within the movement

> 'that 'devadasis' formed a major source for recruitment in prostitution, and [the practice was] located in superstition, poverty and illiteracy among lower castes.' (Tambe 2008: 89)

Most importantly, the matters of rape, domestic violence and uniform civil law cut across class lines and as such they were subjected to wide public criticism, which involved all sections of the society. Despite opening the new wave of Indian feminism, once again the middle class leadership was unable to bring up and unify the women's movement around the problems that did not touch upon their closest social circles (i.e. low wages). The reasons for such attitudes, however, are not adequately explained in the existing research.

Nevertheless, it is particularly worth stressing in the context of these deliberations, that the late 1970s and early 1980s saw a proliferation of the so-called 'autonomous' organizations, which gathered urban middle class activists who (as it was mentioned earlier) arranged large numbers of public debates (Menon 1999: 19; Sen 2011: 196). In Addi, an example of such a group was Saheli created in 1981 on the wave of anti-dowry murder remonstration (Shah & Shah 2008: 68; Sen 2011: 197), or Stree Sanghharsh, which also focused on dowry related issues (Gangoli 2007: 21; Sen 2011: 197). This was considered to be a mainly middle class concern. 'Autonomous' groups were also devoted to research work on women's situation in India, which led to a noticeable growth of publishing activity.[26] The important feature which was to distinguish this kind of associations from other forms of social organizing at that time was their lack of 'party affiliations or formal hierarchical structure, although individual members often had party connections' (Menon 1999: 19). The general anti-state atmosphere and the disappointment with the government's failure

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[25] Similarly to dowry, *sati* is considered to be a mainly upper caste/class women's problem, which spreads to the lower strata of society.

[26] One of the most known examples is a Addi-based journal *Manushi,* started in 1978 (Kishwar 2011: 36). Ilina Sen claims that it was in 1977 (Sen 2011: 197).

in improving women's status certainly encouraged the unsympathetic attitude of these organizations towards the government. However, this situation has been gradually changing since Rajiv Gandhi took up the office of Prime Minister in the mid-1980s. On the one hand, he gave a greater priority to women's issues. On the other, women's groups also saw that cooperating with the government could augment their impact (Jandhyala 2001, quoted in Sharma 2008: 36). In this context it is important to note that Rajiv's shift in economic policies – from state-led modernization to economic liberalization – introduced decentralization and increased the availability of funding from both national and international agencies (Agnihotri & Mazumdar 1995, quoted in Sharma 2008: 35; Menon 1999: 20).

The reason for the decline of the women's movement in the immediate post-independence era was precisely the withdrawal of the middle class from this form of activity. Women's issues no longer influenced state politics as members of the middle class felt their demands were satisfied. Middle class women benefited from the bills passed by the new Indian government as these laws addressed their primary concerns. The common goals of the middle class were therefore achieved. It was only the economic crisis in the 1970s and the 1980s that led to a substantial proliferation of institutions dealing with development. It became clear that government policies did not uproot women's problems or uplift their situation. The boom of third sector organizations provided middle class members with new job opportunities. Subsequently, economic liberalization – by emphasizing the virtues of privatization and decentralization – created the space to be filled by private non-governmental organizations. Again, the middle classes of India eagerly took this opportunity. The reasons for this 'eagerness' as carried on in contemporary times will be examined in the following chapters. However, the whole discourse of contemporary women and developmental issues, as well as the activities of non-governmental organizations, cannot be seen without this context. It is crucial to note that since colonial times the middle classes have not only been the leaders of modernization and development (including women's issues), but also modernization and development has been a constitutive element of their identity making.

SHIFTING MEANINGS OF WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

In the following section I attempt to examine the consequences of the economic liberalization and 'opening of India to the world' (initiated by the

government of Rajiv Gandhi), as well as the processes of globalization for the third sector in India. On the one hand, structural adjustment policies entail state withdrawal of its welfare functions and delegate services provision to third sector organizations. In such a course, the state operates more as a 'funding body' (Swaminathan 1994: 61). However, the conclusion of a subsequent greater autonomy of third sector organizations would be premature. Quite the contrary, as Siddhartha Sen shows, in the 1980s and 1990s the governments' control over non-governmental organizations and other types of voluntary organizations increased in comparison with the previous periods (Sen 1999: 343–346). The Foreign Contribution Registration Act was first amended in 1985, so that it enabled 'the state to ban any organization from receiving, should the state consider that organization to be political rather than *neutral* NGO' (Sen 1999: 343). Even stricter supervisory measures were introduced by an amendment in 2010 (Shariq 2011). Another law, the Financial Act of 1983, eradicated tax exemptions for companies contributing to NGOs' programs, as well as limited tax exemptions from income-generating activities of organizations (Sen 1999: 343; Kilby 2011: 15). What is more, the assistive, service-delivery role of NGOs has been continuously stressed in the governments' Five Year Plans since 1980, which limited the scope of NGOs activities, and discouraged them from actions which might have been considered political. Even if the Kudal commission, appointed by the government in the 1980s to publicly trace lapses in NGOs accountability, eventually did not result in any charges against the scrutinized, it consequently discouraged other organizations from opposing state policies (Kilby 2011: 17). The case of India does not fit into the story of undiversified influences of neo-liberalisation processes on the states' politics that would lead to an unconditional domination of privatization and anti-welfare measures (Ong 2006, quoted in Sharma 2008: 44).

'First, it illustrates that a selective implementation of neoliberal technologies and their articulation with varied contexts and histories can result in discontinuous consequences, such as the preservation and expansion of state welfare functions in some places. Second, postcolonial states, such as India, have rarely enjoyed the resources or the panoptic reach of metropolitan biopower regimes and welfare states in the West (Ferguson 1994; Gupta 2001). Governments are now supposed to roll back welfare, but one can legitimately ask what exactly are postcolonial states retreating from the current neoliberal moment. Third, entities such as NGOs, which help privatize the state, always operate within the purview of regulative, governmental regimes. The Indian government monitors NGOs through registration laws

and funding stipulations, rendering questionable the independence connoted by the term "nongovernmental".' (Ong 2006, quoted in Sharma 2008: 44)[27]

However limited (as strictly state-controlled), the privatization and decentralization of power influenced the sector of women's organizations in India. Another alteration, once again, came from the area of women's studies. As we have seen above, thanks to the critique of women's role in development as passive actors and receivers of welfare services, the shift from an agenda known as Women and Development (WAD) toward Women in Development (WID) took place in the 1970s and the early 1980s. Consequently, programmes aiming at increasing women's involvement in development initiatives (such as micro-credits, income generation activities, employment and education incentives) were initiated. However, the mid-1980s brought yet another change into this sector: Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Accordingly, GAD theorists assessed critically the lapses of WID, arguing that the latter lacked reflection over the nature of development and its misuses. Moreover, they pointed to the ignorance of the power relations within WID, and postulated focus on gender instead of women's issues which would, in their opinion, provide a more complex approach. GAD practitioners rehearsed an even greater participation of women in development programs, stressing the need for awareness raising and social education as keys to systematic changes (Sharma 2008: 4–6).

Characteristically, though, the understanding of development itself shifted and GAD emerged along economic liberalization policies. Both advocated for a greater participation of beneficiaries in development programmes. First, since the report of the National Commission on Women 'Sharma Shakti' saw the light of day in 1987, women's organizations oriented their activities towards self-help groups, stressing the need for the beneficiaries' participation in their programmes (Kilby 2011: 10–11). Second, the reliance on external funding[28] not only induced structural changes in women's organizations, but also to a great extent profiled their interests. The subsidizing of 'autonomous' groups, which emerged in the 1970s, gradually transformed them into non-governmental organizations characterized by a hierarchical structure and professionalization (Menon 1999: 20). These processes

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[27] Ardhana Sharma (2008) provides an excellent study on negotiating the role of the state in contemporary India.

[28] As Patrick Kilby (2011: 5) shows, since 2005 the funding from the state has been overtaking the international one.

of NGO-ization of the women's movement (Kamat 2002) continued in the 1990s and later. Following the donors suggestions and requirements, empowerment in its amended version was being implemented, and its significance within development was increasing.[29] Although empowerment constituted an important site of 'autonomous groups'' activities as it was incorporated in their declared goals as well, there were also some serious transformations in the perceiving and practicing empowerment employed by and in non-governmental organizations (Sen 1999: 344–345; Kilby 2011: 10–11, 15–16, 20, 26).

> 'Since the 80s, there has been a large scale co-option of feminist rhetoric by the state and empowerment of women is a slogan glibly rattled off in government documents. However, it is increasingly being recognized that this kind of government programme aims at empowering women only to the extent that it would serve the purposes of education for population control through, for example, drives against child marriage. This has resulted in a distinct shift from struggle to development in the agenda of women's organizations.' (Menon 1999: 20)

These transformations continued in the following years. What is more, they were sufficiently profound to trigger the shift in TSOs' identifications. For instance, Patrick Kilby (2011: 22) extends the analysis of V. Viswanath (1993), who distinguished two main categories of non-governmental organizations working on women's issues in the 1980s: service/welfare and struggle-oriented. He notices an alteration which took place in the early 2000s 'with most NGOs in India targeting women at a practical level such as microfinance or income generation. Fewer NGOs *directly* address gender-based violence, alcoholism, access to work and other strategic gender needs' (Kilby 2011: 22, italics mine). I argue that there is a confusion in scholars' classifications which is aimed at indicating the change of non-governmental organizations in this manner. If we agree that such a change occurs, its core is not necessarily (or not merely) based on the differences in NGOs' declarative goals. In other words, it does not hinge on the issues addressed by non-governmental organizations. This is because 'traditional' women's problems mentioned by Patrick Kilby are consequently targeted by women's organizations, while the comparison in numbers of the organizations involved cannot be a valid indicator of shifting trends. As we have seen in the previous sections, the growth of the third sector in recent years

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[29] For more on this issue see chapter 5.

was momentous. At the same time, it is thorny to precisely assess the exact number of these organizations, let alone to accurately list the issues that they undertake. Thus, under these circumstances, drawing a conclusion on the changing nature of development and empowerment (and as a consequence – non-governmental organizations) that would be based on the quantitative indicators seems rather perilous. In other words, it is questionable to conclude on a qualitative matter on the basis of quantitative data. If there is a noticeable difference in the nature of contemporary empowerment as it is employed by non-governmental organizations, it is so not because some of the issues which they used to undertake were abandoned, while others gained importance. Nor are these processes reflected quantitatively. Rather, it is so because non-governmental organizations incorporated specific methods of tackling long-known problems as they were expected to do by their donors. More precisely, even when NGOs address the so-called 'traditional' women's issues, such as gender-based violence and access to work, they do so by using methods of income generation programmes and micro-credits.

Therefore, I believe that the new trends in development and empowerment work are not so much reflected in the issues undertaken, but more by the methods in which the latter are meant to be alleviated. The incorporation of these methods, along with the subsequent focus on their proper implementation, results in a merger of women's issues and the new development doctrine. What is more, it leads to recreating the notion and practice of *struggling*. Previously, within feminist movements of the 1970s (especially in autonomous groups), struggle was understood as *against* the dominant systems of power and meanings by which these systems were represented. Such a meaning was derived from a general anti-government attitude. However, with structural adjustment policies (and more precisely with the methods that they advocate) and the government's recognition of the women's question, struggle is more often perceived as a struggle *within* these systems and meanings. The reason is that even if the issues undertaken within women's NGOs oscillate around concerns mentioned above (such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, child marriages, female infanticide and dowry deaths, and introduced relatively recently: homosexual women's rights, HIV/AIDS and sex trafficking[30]), the methods which they employ do not aim at

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[30] Anagha Tambe claims that 'the politics for the rights of women in prostitution seems to have emerged in India in the decade of 1990s […]' (Tambe 2008: 74) by which she means that the availability of funds for 'HIV/AIDS prevention and control' (Tambe 2008: 74–75), as well as 'anti-trafficking

changing power relations, but rather at incorporating beneficiaries into the existing ones. As I aim to show in the next chapters, these practices – even if their goal is to improve the situation of women – ultimately restrain the 'militant' dimensions of the women's movement and non-governmental organizations as they render and undermine the debate about the change of power systems as irrelevant.

Once again, in order to analyze possible connections between its status in society and the changing meaning of development (and empowerment within it), we should take a closer look at the position of the middle class in this period. Indeed, it is understood that the introduction of economic liberalization influenced the middle class, and consequently its perception of development policies. It comes as no surprise if we remember that development has been constitutive to middle class formation. Thus, these phenomena permeate each other. In order to fully understand the developments that occurred along economic liberalization, we might once again turn to Satish Deshpande:

'Within the postcolonial nation […], the idea of development acquires a pre-eminent status and important functions. In the most general terms, development-as-ideology helps articulate state, nation and economy, and thus plays a crucial role in securing the coherence of emergent postcolonial nations. It is common to anthropomorphize the nation, and to think that 'development' is a sort of career choice made by the nation; however, it is equally true that the idea of development is itself an ingredient that goes into the making of the nation.' (Deshpande 1997: 297–298)

Furthermore, in the Nehruvian era the middle class was devoted to the politics of austerity and self-restraint – these virtues were perceived as noble, and helpful in government policies to uplift the poor. However, since economic liberalization, personal success (most often highlighted by consumption capability) comes to the fore. India's poor are not to be uplifted through government programmes, but through the voluntary support of those who succeed in their lives.

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discourse' (Tambe 2008: 76) boosted the growth of various organizations for women in prostitution. However, she also asserts, as it was shown above, that the issue of prostitution was undertaken both in colonial times, as well as within the *devadasi* abolition movement in the 1970s and 1980s (Tambe 2008: 89). In the latter case, however, it was women in prostitution who took on this issue, 'prostitution was, perhaps, so alien to the experiences of middle-class feminists that it was not addressed in such terms at all' (Gangoli 2008: 15).

Thus, in the pre-liberalization era 'development-as-ideology' served as a unifying platform and its goal was understood to ultimately benefit all sections of society. The state's role in development projects was prevalent. In other words, development was a tool of and for the state's legitimization, a mode for expressing 'nation-as-community' (Deshpande 1997: 299). However, in the post-liberalization era one can see a significant decline of public discourse about development (Deshpande 1997: 303). It does not mean that 'development' as such was abandoned; nevertheless it changed its attire as the implementing of structural adjustment policies required the state to delegate its welfare role to third sector organizations (see also Edwards & Hulme 1996: 4; Sharma 2008). In the following chapters I will examine more closely the changing meanings of development for the middle classes, as they are practiced in non-governmental organizations; but for now I will limit myself to just a few remarks. First, as Leela Fernandes shows, one of the causes for the departure from state-subsidized economy was the growing disappointment of the middle classes with the adopted model of development which, as it was felt by many, did not fulfil the pledges and demands for modernity (Fernandes 2006: 27). Second, the reforms of economic liberalization initiated by the government of Rajiv Gandhi created a new set of appreciated values. Consumption – not industrialization – was pronounced the key to modernity and the life-blood of development (Fernandes 2006: 38). If in the past to be middle class meant 'to inhibit a particular orientation towards modernity' (Baviskar & Ray 2011: 6), to have a sense of responsibility for the nation and fellow citizens (particularly the poor) based on austerity and savings, in post-liberalization India middle class economic well-being was brought to the fore (Baviskar & Ray 2011: 6; Fernandes 2006: 37–39; Deshpande 1997; 2003). In such reasoning, the middle class' economic advancements work for the uplifting of the whole society. This approach seems to be particularly visible in appraisals of the middle class' purchasing capacity, so prevalent since the 1990s. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the consuming boom has been believed to provide a boost for Indian economy. In this chapter I aimed to show that, considering historical developments, the involvement of the middle class in the women and development area hardly comes as astonishing. To the contrary, the middle class, since its emergence in colonial times, has continued to shape the scope of this sector. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak puts it:

'Colonialism was committed to the education of a certain class. It was interested in the seemingly permanent operation of an altered normality. Paradoxically,

human rights and «development» work today cannot claim this self-empowerment that high colonialism could. Yet, some of the best products of high colonialism, descendants of the colonial middle class, become human rights advocates in the countries of the South.' (Spivak 2004: 524)

Last but not least, I would like to highlight another phenomenon which was not adequately explained in this chapter: the flow of foreign workers into Indian organizations. In order to understand it, one must look at both the ways by which it is feasible, and the ways the socio-economic situation in India is pictured in international discourses. In particular, globalization[31] – which in this context might be perceived as a process of flows of things, people and ideas – makes people more interconnected (Kalb, Pansters & Siebers 2004). On the one hand, technological achievements facilitate travelling; on the other hand, they also improve the access to information. Thus, although the presence of foreigners in Indian modernization projects is not a new occurrence (see e.g. Weber 2011), it is hard to argue with the fact that globalization opened up new opportunities for foreigners wishing to join the third sector. In terms of technological advancement in the contemporary world, the obvious advantage comes with the feasibility of changing one's location by various means of transportation. In addition, the Internet and social media make the information about other parts of the world easily available for the inhabitants of the North.

The so-called 'opening the world' for international travellers explains the comparative lack of practical difficulties in coming to India. However, another issue is their willingness to come. I assume that one of the reasons for such a move derives from the image of India and her citizens in Western media coverage. Might taking part in women and development projects in the 'Third World' seem 'appealing'? Frequently, my fellows from different parts of the world (Canada, UK, US and Australia) referred to the figure of a 'discriminated Indian woman' whom they arrived to help. They underlined that not being born in India, they were not fated for discrimination. In their opinion, contrary to Indian women, they were privileged as Western societies were (more) tolerant by default. Conversations in which they stressed their relief and happiness at coming from the West were not

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[31] I do not argue that globalization contains entirely positive processes. As it does not affect everyone to the same extent (Ferguson 2006), it is a process of re-stratification and shaping of a new socio-cultural hierarchy (Bauman 1998).

unusual.[32] Therefore, their picture of Indian women strongly reflected the one to be found in popular discourse. In such, India is indeed considered to be a country where women are largely discriminated against.[33] According to an online article:

> 'Because of lack of acceptance from the male dominant society, Indian women suffer immensely. Women are responsible for bearing children, yet they are malnourished and in poor health. Women are also overworked in the field and complete the all of the domestic work. Most Indian women are uneducated. Although the country's constitution says women have equal status to men, women are powerless and are mistreated inside and outside the home. India is a society where the male is greatly revered. Therefore women, especially the young girls, get very little respect and standing in this country. The women of the household are required to prepare the meal for the men, who eat most of the food. Only after the males are finished eating, can the females eat. Typically the left-over food is meager, considering the families are poor and have little to begin with. This creates a major problem with malnutrition, especially for pregnant or nursing women. Very few women seek medical care while pregnant because it is thought of as a temporary condition. This is one main reason why India's maternal and infant mortality rates are so high. Starting from birth, girls do not receive as much care and commitment from their parents and society as a boy would.' (*Tripod* 2013; sic)

India is the 'fourth most dangerous place for women in the world' (*India Today* 2011). One of the main problems being trafficking of women and children, where 'helpless girls are trapped into the night-marish world of prostitution' (Rozario, Rasool & Kesari 1988: vii) and which is 'an obscene affront to their dignity and rights [...], a gross commercialization of innocent human lives, perpetuated by organised[34] criminals' (Nair & Sen 2005: xxi). According to the United States Department of State's information on trafficking, 'sex trafficking of women and girls [in India] is widespread' (*State Department* 2013). In their opinion, women, mainly from Nepal and Bangladesh, but also from Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Serbia, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan, are among the most often endangered by sex

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[32] Herein I refer to the picture of discriminated Indian women that my colleagues had prior to their internships. For the picture of women targeted by the organizations, see chapter 4.

[33] I touched on these issues also in chapter 1.

[34] Original.

trafficking. These dealings also take place within India, where women from north-eastern states and Odisha are either coerced into marriages or sold to the states where the number of men is lower than the number of women, 'some of whom are subsequently forced into prostitution or labour by their new *families*' (*State Department* 2013, italics original).

According to this stand, Indian women and girls are being similarly exploited in the Middle East. Those particularly vulnerable are women who decide to leave their spouses as a consequence of domestic violence. Furthermore, sex trafficking is also prevalent in armed groups of Maoists and Naxalites. The authors of the report claim that sex trafficking in India is becoming more difficult to combat as traffickers move their 'businesses' to locations which are better hidden, like rural areas and residential districts in the cities. Moreover, it is complained that while the traffickers continue to improve their guise, the Indian government does not adequately address this organized crime. The authors state that: 'The Government of India does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so'. (*State Department* 2013) These efforts consist of amending the penal code and creating local Anti-Human Trafficking Units under the supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs. While the inadequacy of these activities rests on:

> '[the units] being ineffective or only established on paper. The government provided no information on investigations or prosecutions of trafficking offenses or on convictions or punishments of trafficking offenders. […] The complicity of some government officials in human trafficking remained a serious and unaddressed problem which impeded efforts to adequately fight the crime. A variety of sources noted the Indian central government approached human trafficking in an uncoordinated, piecemeal fashion, its prioritization of anti-trafficking efforts decreased over the year, and some officials' inertia and indifference impeded efforts.' (*State Department* 2013)

As such, India seems to be a country of poor, vulnerable, discriminated women. Not only are they marginalized by men, but they are also left alone by government officials. If there is any help to their problems, it is incompetent and inaccurate. With such a picture painted, there is a vast area of sex-trafficking-related problems to be covered by non-governmental organizations, particularly so if one takes a look at the statistics. According to the annual report issued by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

in 2010 there were 3,422 reported cases of 'human being trafficking'[35] in India, and this number dropped from 4,997 in 2006 (MHA 2011–2012: 90). However, these figures are not so 'optimistic' according to the estimations of non-governmental organizations. Dasra calculates that there are between 12 to 16 million sex-trafficking victims in India alone, while 15% of them are below 15 years old (Dasra 2013: 8). Another organization, Asian Philanthropy Forum, claims that the average age of the sex-trafficked decreased from 14–16 to 10–14 over the years (Asian Philanthropy Forum 2014). Thus, it is hardly surprising that fighting sex trafficking in India appears as a noble cause to the interns that I encountered during my fieldwork. However, it seems that they were not only attracted by the cause, but also by the experience and opinion about the organizations volunteered for. The smaller, emerging and less known organization that I worked for, Shakti, did not receive so many volunteers. It was a different case for the Women's Foundation, where the number of interns[36] came to 10 at one point in time. It must be noted, though, that the latter was an organization known world-wide, with a rather good reputation. The invitation for Americans to devote a few months (or more) of their time was even published in the New York Times, announced by one of the most recognized activists against trafficking in women and children.[37] Given the context of a post-colonial and developing country such as India, the appearance of interns from US, UK, Australia and Canada in non-governmental organizations of this country may seem as an imperial imposition, a continuation of the colonial project in contemporary times. Raised and educated in the West, interns arrive in India with the task of helping vulnerable and indecisive women. The latter, as I mentioned, not only require this help, but also require it from foreign citizens as their countrymen are not able to provide adequate services themselves. Looking back at my first stays in India, I must admit that I aimed at confirming this exploitive pattern being exercised by whites on indigenous feminists and Indian development beneficiaries. Similarly, I was particularly sensitive to this idea while working in Shakti and the Women's Foundation.[38]

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[35] This number encompasses only girls as the category of 'human being trafficking' consists of procurement of minor girls, importation of girls, selling of girls for prostitution, buying of girls for prostitution and issues related to Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (MHA 2011–2012: 90).

[36] I refer to the terms used in the organizations' language: in Shakti unpaid workers were called volunteers, and in the Women's Foundation – interns.

[37] I deliberately do not give any reference to this publication in order to protect the organization and its employees' privacy.

[38] More on my presumptions and resulting initial research questions in chapter 1.

This brought some conceptual obstacles, because the notion of feminism in India is uneasy, as since colonial times it has been associated with and enmeshed in Western domination. Sarojini Naidu, a poet and an activist of the Indian Independence movement, in her speech for the All India Women's Conference[39] in 1930 explicitly stated: 'I am not a feminist' (Forbes 2008: 158; Chaudhuri 2011: xix; Pande 2014). In this, she equated feminism – in her opinion, a Western invention – with imperialism (Pande 2014). Similarly, the term seemed uneasy to Indira Gandhi, the former Indian Prime Minister. In her speech for the same organization in 1980, titled *True Liberation of Women*, she said: 'I have often said that I am not a feminist' (Gandhi 1980, quoted in Chaudhuri 2011: xx). She explained her attitude as contradictory to Western feminism, as the latter – in her opinion – was based on the imitation of men. To the contrary, Indian women should focus on their distinctiveness, strongly related to the Indian nation:

> 'Indian women are traditionally conservative but they also have the genius of synthesis, to adapt and absorb. That what gives them resilience to face suffering and to meet upheavals with a degree of calm, to change constantly and yet remain changeless, which is the quality of India herself.' (Gandhi 1980, quoted in Chaudhuri 2011: xx)

Accordingly – and conversely to Western feminism – Indian feminism did not focus on the differences between men and women as it was rooted in a joint struggle for independence (Basu 1976: 40, quoted in Chaudhuri 2011: xxi). In her influential essay, first published in 1990, Madhu Kishwar explicitly refuses to be labelled a feminist. First of all, she refuses the 'horror of [any] -isms' for self-identification as she believes that it is inevitably followed by the declaration of a particular group membership. However, at the same time, it does not certify that people labelled in a particular manner share the same values and perspective (Kishwar 1999: 273). Thus, she refrains from calling a women's studies journal started by her in 1978, *Manushi,* a feminist one (Kishwar 1999: 273). Interestingly, she claims that although in the West feminism is perceived as a positive phenomenon and movement, *the word […] evokes no such positive connotations in India* (Kishwar 1999: 276). It emanates from the West, and it is accompanied by an

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[39] As the President of this organization.

'underlying assumption […] that all those who refuse to be converted are steeped in ignorance or stupidity, that their lives cannot be satisfactory if they do not follow the role model provided by the western society.' (Kishwar 1999: 277)

Thus, for Madhu Kishwar, in India feminism as a label is used by a privileged group of the English-speaking elite which uses it mostly for personal gains. In this case the aim of referring to this term is a career in the international arena rather than bringing an actual change in society (as it is the aim of feminism in the West). In this sense, in India feminism is rather an 'international bandwagon' (Kishwar 1999: 284–288).

Influenced by these readings and by the interviews which I conducted with NGO workers[40] during my first stays in India, I thought that the idea of feminism would not be welcomed by the Indians working in the organizations. My reservations seemed to be confirmed at one of the first staff meetings that I attended at the Women's Foundation.[41] The profile of the organization and its activities were being discussed. Sadar, a senior associate at the President's office, asked whether the Women's Foundation was interested in 'rescuing men and boys from prostitution', and not focusing solely on women. He pointed at the statistics. According to his knowledge, there were 10% of men and boys among prostitutes, thus including them was not an urgent issue for the Women's Foundation. Sadar continued that one should acknowledge the fact that in a *gender society* male prostitution should be the organization's concern as well. Sevita replied: *but what is a gender society? That men are going to the laundry?* She laughed and others joined her. Someone else added: *We are not feminists!* Laughs continued. To me, this situation clearly indicated that for my co-workers the idea of feminism was strongly unwelcomed, a Western invention that I read about. In this context, I perceived the Western interns – who frequently declared to be feminists – as *invaders* coming to India in order to graft foreign thoughts. A few days later I decided to discuss my observations with Amrusha. Born in an Indian family which emigrated to the United States, Amrusha was raised in North Carolina. She was the only intern (except for me) present at the staff meeting. I shared with her that in my opinion feminism was not an accepted concept among the Indian workers who participated in the meeting. I pointed out that they laughed at the very suggestion. Amrusha did not agree with me. She interpreted their amusement as an expression of

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40 None of the persons I interviewed by that time called themselves feminist.
41 All of them were Indians.

an apprehension to be identified as anti-men. We did not reach a common conclusion. My confusion grew in the following months at the Women's Foundation as I eventually heard Indian workers (both permanent staff and interns) calling themselves feminists. The amusement at the idea, which I noticed at the first staff meeting that I attended, faded or disappeared. This, in turn, put a question mark on my initial assumptions. Further on, I looked at the reasons for the feminism of my co-workers. Were they using it merely instrumentally, as an 'international bandwagon' (Kishwar 1999: 284)? What was feminism for them, and how was it used? Or, in the minimalistic scenario, were men and women equal to them? I will discuss these issues in the following chapters.[42]

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[42] See especially chapter 4.

Chapter 3

NON–GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
AS A MIDDLE CLASS ENTERPRISE

'Class structures relations among people; these relations are critical for understanding not only life chances, but also political behaviour.' (Agarwala & Herring 2008: 2)

The middle class has become so accepted a concept in the Indian popular discourse, especially in the post-liberalization era[1], that it is very often taken for granted; a common knowledge about the organization of our social world, without a solemn need for further explanation. The popularity of class – the frequency of myself and my interlocutors defining ourselves with this concrete identity – was precisely the reason why I focused on its relevance to my study. In academic discourse, the tradition of class analysis is as impressive as it is overwhelming. Immanuel Wallerstein (Wallerstein 1991: 115) notes that class was already discussed in ancient Greece, although it might be said that today this concept is most commonly derived from Marx(ism). Therefore, the decision to position myself within the group of scholars who utilize class analysis in their considerations was a difficult one. In this chapter I aim to explain the reasons for choosing class as best suited to describe the social world I encountered during my fieldwork. Given the complexity, quality and quantity of various interpretations, by no means do I aim for a comprehensive study, and hope the reader will forgive my omissions. I focus less – if at all – on the discussion of class as understood within various theoretical schools.[2]. To

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[1]   I wrote more on these issues in chapter 1.
[2]   See for example: E.O. Wright (2005) for summaries of neo-Marxist, neo-Weberian, neo-Durkheiman, Pierre Bourdieu's, rent-based and post-class analysis approaches.

paraphrase Rina Agarwala and Ronald J. Herring (2008: 2): I hold myself to no orthodoxy.

In this chapter I aim to describe the NGOs' employees whom I met during my research course within different categories, such as race, ethnicity, caste, nationality, gender and class, but ultimately I argue that middle class belonging is not only a dominant characteristic of the qualified workers who entertain the privileges and responsibilities of working in the head offices of NGOs, but also a necessary condition to be employed in such a position. Consequently, I show the ways in which, in the post-liberalization situation, employment in the women and development sector presents an opportunity for middle class members to reinforce their social standing. Further, I describe how the mechanisms of the recruitment system favour members of this class; how modern non-governmental organizations, facing demands of accountability, promote members of the middle class as the only suitable candidates to fill higher positions in NGOs. As such, this chapter is aimed at the understanding of ways in which the NGOs boom is related to the changes in the role of the middle class and its significance in contemporary India. Thus, it is designed as a basis for deliberations in the following chapters as it enables the reader to grasp the ways in which middle class formation is feasible in NGO environment and, as such, shapes the scope, effectiveness and goals of the development apparatus.

NGO, DEVELOPMENT AGENTS AND CLASS

The flow of funds to non-governmental organizations caused their gradual professionalization. In other words, liberalization leads to 'privatization of public interest' and subsequent decentralization (Kamat 2004)[3] and NGO-ization of the women's movement; albeit the scope of this liberalization remains debatable. However, how can one define a contemporary non-governmental organization? As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the brief historical overview of middle class involvement in modernization/development projects was necessarily sketchy, one of the reasons being the difficulty of defining a concrete form of organization that would be adequate for all the historical periods. Nevertheless, the proliferation of different forms of organizing in contemporary times does not make this task particularly easier. A glance at the

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[3] For consequences of NGO-ization of women's movements in Latin America see Sonia Alvarez (1999), Laura Macdonald (1995), in Germany – Sabine Lang (1997).

terms used in the literature sheds some light on these obstacles. Third sector[4] organizations carry various names: international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), grassroots movements (GROs), non-profit organizations (NPOs, also called non-party political formations or action groups), community based-organizations (CBOs), government-organized NGOs (GONGOs), people's organizations (POs), donor-organized NGOs (DONGOs), quasi-autonomous NGOs (QUNGOs) etc. (Fisher 1997; Sen 1999; Kamat 2003), while each of them denotes a particular form of emergence, a degree of independence from the state, political parties and donor agencies, as well as justifies the degree to which certain organizations possess the right to represent the 'people's voice'. I neither aim at referring to the existing typologies, nor try to position non-governmental organizations within any of these, following William F. Fisher's (1997) view that the activity of an organization and its interconnections are analytically more fruitful than classifications. Although I do not aim to indicate that the NGOs I cooperated with were not subjected to or were somehow independent from state policies, I nevertheless employ the term of non-governmental organizations. It is important to mention that at first NGOs were perceived as a pillar of civil society and agents of change as it was believed that they were capable of reaching and representing the most vulnerable members of societies (Hulme & Edwards 1996: 5). However, a closer examination of their activities led to the conclusion that their work carries a certain degree of ambiguity. As they are always a part of a socio-cultural context in a particular moment of time, they are not oriented solely toward the realization of their goals. To the contrary, the latter are being formulated in relation to and within power structures (Fisher 1997).

The choice to describe the organizations I worked with as non-governmental seems to be venturesome, considering the fact that both the Women's Foundation and Shakti represent themselves under different descriptions. The Women's Foundation employs the name of a 'grassroots movement' which indicates that it was started by 22 women in prostitution and the current President of the organization. Considering the fact that the latter claims that all 22 women died, and she has become the only one left to voice their claims and concerns, the other features of this organization come to the fore, so that both 'grassroots' and 'movement' seem open to discussion.

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[4] It should be noted that the term 'third sector' carries certain connotations as well. It might be used to describe entities which find themselves in between state and business organizations. However, herein I employ 'third sector organizations' as the most general term and would rather avoid these kinds of connotations.

Shakti members, in this regard, represent the organization as a 'non-profit' organization, a term which also does not describe its full characteristics. My goal here, however, is neither to criticize these organizations' self-representations, nor their accountability. Conversely, by referring to them as 'non-governmental' – as it embraces many features of these organizations – I aim to avoid this kind of valuation. In the following pages I refer to the definition by Siddartha Sen who states that:

> 'In India, NGOs can be defined as organizations that are generally formed by professionals or quasi professionals from the middle or lower middle class, either to serve or work with the poor […]. The NGOs are generally non-membership organizations and have salaried employees.' (Sen 1999: 332)

In this way, he underlines the issue of professionalization of NGOs which emerged in response to donors' demands for effectiveness and accountability (Kamat 2004: 168). On the one hand, professionalization requires competent staff, and this is probably the dimension which Siddartha Sen has in mind. On the other hand, professionalization also requires a clear reporting structure of NGOs' employees, which is reflected in a hierarchical mode of organizing.

Although Shakti was an emerging organization, the hierarchical structure was already noticeable. The central figure was the organization's President, Neha. Decision-making was considered to be her right: not only was she the person to whom the idea of starting this NGO belonged, but she also possessed an extensive experience both in the area of human trafficking and prostitution, including the community targeted by Shakti. She claimed the authority of deciding about the organization's activities and their scope, hiring volunteers and regular employees, drafting the organization's working documents, as well as defining its vision and mission. Although the final call was always hers, I was granted high prerogatives as an administrative assistant, programme coordinator, research coordinator, as well as a human resources specialist and fundraiser. Therefore[5], as Neha's 'right hand woman', I participated in all the activities mentioned above. Another strain of the organizational structure was represented by Rahul, the programme coordinator. However,

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[5]   It should be mentioned that despite my volunteer status (I was not paid by Shakti), I enjoyed elevated prerogatives as a consequence of the lack of other employees. As an organization *in statu nascendi*, Shakti was still developing its professional base. The situation was quite different at the Women's Foundation, where the interns' influence on decision-making was considerably lower, and more related to their engagement and experience.

his main role was facilitating contacts with the community. Although Neha from time to time – most often following my suggestions – consulted his opinions, they were rarely taken into consideration when it came to planning the organization's policies. Rahul came from the community of beneficiaries: he was both low class and caste, and his command of English was limited. The high esteem which he exercised in the colony, as well as the fact that he was the only college graduate among his neighbours, positioned him as a broker and facilitator between the community and Shakti's employees/ volunteers, but not a decision maker. Lastly, there were very few volunteers who reported directly to me or to the President (in the case that they worked from abroad and she knew them personally). They cooperated with Shakti for only a short time – a maximum of a few weeks – and they were assigned to concrete tasks (like literature review), and while I was responsible for coordinating their work, as well as for passing on Neha's orders, she was the one to hire, fire and evaluate them.

In the case of the Women's Foundation, the most important person – the President – was physically absent, as she was undergoing a medical treatment in the US. Virtually, however, she was always in the organization. She kept track of things as much as she could. I heard a lot about the President: about her particularity, style of management, and lack of respect for her employees and their time. A distant figure who was always there: through phone calls, Skype conversations and emails, as well as in the employees' minds. Whenever her condition improved, it was reflected in the organization's daily life. The organization's CEO was eating nervously before receiving a phone call from her. The frequency of gossiping about her increased with every rumour that her health would allow her to come back to India. Interestingly, the attitudes toward the possibility of her sudden appearance in the Addi office were ambiguous: it often seemed that the fear of the 'terror' she would spread while physically present in the organization's office prevailed over the joy about her better health.

Perhaps another sign of her importance was the location of the head office. When I went there for a job interview, neither my auto-rickshaw driver nor I could find the address. We asked around and I arrived late by at least half an hour. Later on I found out that the other workers had usually experienced the same difficulties in finding the place for the first time. One of the reasons for that was the address system practised in Addi.[6] The other one, important

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6   Colonies are divided into blocks marked by letters of the English alphabet, but block A is not necessarily located next to block B, etc. Buildings were marked by the block's letter and a building's

in this context, was that outside of the building there was no board indicating the organization's name, but simply a board with the address and the President's name – with no indication of her affiliation. This was especially confusing for people who did not know that the Women's Foundation was located on the two top floors which belonged to the President.[7] Therefore, if one wanted to find the place, first he or she needed to know who the person in charge was. This minor symbol – the marking the space – was extended to the media coverage about the Women's Foundation, as the President was clearly the face of the organization, and her achievements represented it (and vice versa). All other employees were her subordinates which was clearly indicated in a graph, in organizational language called an organogram. The graph did not leave any doubts that the executive director leads the organization. Other positions in this reporting structure clearly indicate the scope of the work: head of programmes, head of monitoring and evaluation, etc. This structure was repeatedly discussed at staff meetings to ensure that everyone concerned knew who the people below and above him/her were. The purpose of creating this document – a detailed description of the hierarchy in the organization – was to assure the best management of hired staff, their good performance and accountability, based (among other things) on the professional outlook of the organization.

We were supposed to appear at the office of the Women's Foundation every Monday to Friday at nine in the morning and leave the premises nine hours later.[8] There were a few exceptions: the permanent staff were supposed to work every second Saturday; the employees who were considered by the President to be the most important for the organization's functioning were appointed for a Skype call with her every Wednesday evening. In general, it can be stated that a higher rank at the organization required more frequent encounters[9] with the leader of the Women's Foundation. These were the rules. It must be noted, however, that they were adjustable. The interns were granted more flexible hours if they wished so, and for the permanent employees working from home was not unacceptable. We all (particularly the interns) arranged longer lunch hours; there were little or no complaints if we were late or left the office early. Although it might be said on these matters that the permanent employees entertained similar privileges to the interns, in sum the latter

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  number, but again A1 might be located next to B2.

[7] The office was relocated to one of the even more prestigious areas after I completed my fieldwork.

[8] Including approximately one hour for lunch.

[9] Although only virtual ones when I was there.

enjoyed a greater degree of flexibility. This difference, it was assumed, derived from the voluntary character of the interns' assignments: we devoted our time and skills with no remuneration. The regular employees were paid for their work. Although the rules of office attendance were clearly given, it was also perceptible that all of us were obligated to fulfil our tasks, preferably on time, rather than to simply present ourselves at the premises. Nevertheless, interning brought a lower access to information and simultaneously less responsibility. In practical terms, the interns were, for instance, not invited to attend the conference calls which usually took place in the mornings. During this time, we were asked by the senior staff to leave the conference room, our usual working space. That is not, however, to say that we were strictly forbidden from attending these meetings, as consent was granted in case of a declared need.[10] The interns were assigned by the permanent employees, the respective heads of particular divisions, to perform concrete tasks. In addition, supervision was assured by selecting an interns' coordinator.[11] Clearly, the interns' role in the Women's Foundation[12] was mostly assistive and supportive; although we were asked for opinions and our ideas were debated and realized at times.[13]

The line of division between the interns and permanent employees was probably the most visible one in the organization's daily operations. At a lower rank – in terms of accessing information and the influence on decision-making processes – there was only the office-boy, whose tasks did not go beyond cleaning, preparing tea, collecting and making lunch orders, heating food when the employees brought home-made dishes, picking up food from the neighbouring restaurants, and key-holding or other casual errands. Here the division line was drawn along the proper education[14] and the knowledge of English, as Prajit could not be a part of most meetings and conversations which were held in this language. Significantly, neither the office boy nor the interns were included in the organogram – the reporting structure within the Women's Foundation mentioned in the previous

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[10] For example, I asked for permission in order to collect research data and as a result I often took part in these meetings.

[11] They changed twice during my stay at the Women's Foundation.

[12] As well as at Shakti, although I hereby focus on the Women's Foundation in order to make my line of reasoning clearer.

[13] For example, once we were asked our opinions on whether the hand-made bags sewn by women from the community in tailoring training would sell as fashionable 'in the West'. Another time, one of the interns made a short movie about sex workers in India, which was her own idea.

[14] The two were interconnected as the only skills valuable for the organization's operations were those to be acquired thanks to formal English education. More on this issue in the next parts of this chapter.

subsection.[15] This document appeared in the organization as a part of the services delivered to the Women's Foundation by one of the major international corporations in this area, HR.[16] In addition, the Women's Foundation was also equipped with a detailed description of respective positions, also largely inspired by HR's suggestions. The competences and responsibilities of the chief operating officer, heads of divisions and other qualified workers were described in detail. It is important to add that both the organogram and the responsibilities of particular employees were broadly discussed at the staff meetings as well as in informal conversations. The rotation of workforce at the Women's Foundation was rather high[17], thus staff shortages were not anything unusual. This, in turn, required changes in the employees' assignments in order to ensure the organization's smooth performance. For instance, just a few weeks after my arrival, the Senior Associate of Strategic Development resigned his position. He had been designated to a special division created in order to provide direct support and assistance for the President of the organization, and after he left this section consisted of the Communication & Networking Officer and the Executive Assistant only. His responsibilities were shared between those two of his former co-workers. The latter very often argued about the scope of their new assignments which created tensions in the organization. Significantly, these kinds of modifications were allowed only between and for the permanent qualified employees: neither the interns, office manager, field workers nor the office boy were ever assigned such responsibilities.

Although the structure of the Women's Foundation was hierarchical, it might be stated that the qualified permanent employees located in the head office – assisted by the interns and led by the President – shaped the organization's policies. The final scope of this NGO's activities was being negotiated in meetings, via documents and emails which circulated among those people. The end product of the decision-making processes framed in this way consisted of a final resolution, usually completed by the heads of divisions

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[15] It might be helpful for the reader to refer once again to the diagram presented on page 70.

[16] Name changed.

[17] Neha, the President of Shakti, was a previous employee of the Women's Foundation. She had not worked for the Women's Foundation for almost a year when I first met her. Nevertheless, when I joined this organization I learned that none of the employees knew Neha. What is more, before I completed my fieldwork, a few key people had already left or had been preparing themselves to leave the organization: the Head of Monitoring and Evaluation, the Head of Programmes, the CEO and the Head of Finance. As a result, when I visited India next time, in October 2012, there were very few people who I had got a chance to know during my fieldwork.

and the CEO, and strongly influenced by the President. The head office of the Women's Foundation was its heart, soul and mind. State coordinators and other field workers followed the directions given by a group of employees located in a small office in one of Addi's most affluent colonies. Covered under everyday administrative tasks, we enjoyed actual power over the lives of members of the communities that the Women's Foundation targeted. As it will be further elaborated in the next chapters[18], the ideas which were reworked in this organization and subsequently implemented in the community of beneficiaries, consisted of various elements to be found in international discourse on sex work and development.[19]

I attempt to shed some light on the agents involved in creating a shared representation and policies of the Women's Foundation as I argue that understanding our actions and motivations might be the key to grasp the successes and failures of NGOs' programmes and activities. By shifting my attention to translations – re-creations and negotiations of the ideas and concepts from women and development discourses – I draw from actor-oriented approaches in post-development studies (Long & Long 1992; Long 2001). However, I point to the significance of the actors themselves, asking about the factors that enable them and influence their preferences to work in the development sector. Hereby it is important to underline that those people operate within the apparatus of the contemporary women and development area and as such influence its scope; in other words, they are the brokers and translators between international (and national) institutions and networks, and local communities (Mosse & Lewis 2006: 13; Escobar 1995: 110). What is more – by supervising fieldworkers, they occupy a privileged position among development agents (Olivier de Sardan 2005: 166). The significance of this conceptual exercise rests on the assumption of a crucial yet presumably ambivalent role of the brokers in developmental activities.

'On the one hand, brokerage has the capacity to ease social interactions, enhance economic activities, and facilitate political development. On the other hand, brokerage often breeds exploitation, the pursuit of personal profit, corruption, and the accumulation of power; through these and other processes, brokerage can exacerbate existing inequalities.' (Stovel & Shaw 2012: 14)

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[18] See particularly chapters 4 and 5.

[19] I do not mean to suggest that these ideas and programs were implemented in the community of beneficiaries without the latter modifying and influencing them. However, in this study I focus on NGOs' employees and their practices (see Introduction for additional explanations).

Importantly, I argue that in order to grasp the processes of translation, one must first look at the ways in which translators are embedded in a social world; to examine the translation of meanings, one must first ask who the actors that translate are and why they are willing and/or feel obligated to translate. Simply, who are the people working in the head office and what qualities and competences entitle them to work in the NGO? How do their social and cultural identities impact their engagement? What can it tell us about the nature of development in the modern world?

Not surprisingly, the group of people that I met was heterogeneous. We practised different religions: Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim. We came from different regions of India, such as Bengal, Uttarachand and Maharashtra, or from different countries: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland. We were men and women, in relationships or single, living with families or alone. We differed in age and possessed various professional and life experiences. We were of different or no caste, of different races. Nevertheless, we worked side by side to create a shared representation of the organization and its policies. What brought my special attention was the fact that the only common element of our self-identifications was middle class belonging. Thus, could it be that the class position facilitates or even conditions the entry to this particular type of employment, in a women and development NGO? Although within the studies about these kinds of organizations the middle class affinity of many NGOs' employees in qualified positions appears to be common knowledge, it does not mean that it is self-explanatory. For Siddartha Sen one of the defining features of a non-governmental organization (as was mentioned above) is its being formed by 'professionals or quasi professionals from the middle or lower middle class' (Sen 1999: 332). However, the relationship between the professional and middle class in contemporary non-governmental organizations remains unclear. It is rather assumed that such organizations consist of middle class professionals than fully explained whether there are methods and instruments which ultimately lead to this particular constellation of class affinity.

James Ferguson, in his classic study of the development apparatus in Lesotho, dismisses class analysis as he argues that neo-Marxist approaches offer too simplified an explanation based on the assumptions of imperial and class-based interventions in the Third World modernization projects. He calls for ethnographic accounts of development in order to fully grasp the processes of domination and resistance and move beyond neo-Marxist, politically motivated – and therefore shallow – statements (Ferguson 1994: 12–13). He further claims that:

'many of the most economically relevant categories are not purely economic. They have economic content, to be sure, but they are implicated in a whole range of economic and non-economic institutions, and can only be understood in that larger context. […] With this much said, it must be noted that, if the economically relevant categories are not *simply* categories of production relations, they still must be specified, and the interests corresponding to them analyzed and made explicit. […] In place of class interest, then, I prefer to use the broader concept of "category interest", where a "category" occupies a certain specified structural position in society and possesses certain interests corresponding to that position.' (Ferguson 1994: 130, italics original)

His ethnography is thus an example of how various social categories are being practised and re-worked whilst class rarely comes to the fore. Similarly, Jean- -Pierre Oliver de Sardan rejects the category of social class as overly associated with the Marxist tradition and therefore too 'rigid, mechanical, economic' (Olivier de Sardan 2005: 191). Instead, he turns toward a 'strategic group' (Olivier de Sardan 2005: 191).[20] It would be a truism, as I already indicated, to state that the concept of class in social sciences is most commonly derived from Marxism – as well as that applying it, as understood within the Marxist tradition, poses serious theoretical obstacles. Not only is the position of the middle class within the Marxist scope a matter of vivid discussion, but also Marx's incomplete definition of this very concept is at stake herein. While class remains a significant feature of his work, he wrote about it mainly in the historical context, while the theoretical one was mentioned at the end of the third, unfinished, volume of 'Capital' (Wright 1985: 6, quoted in Deshpande 2003: 126). Therefore:

'What defines the [Marxist] tradition is more a loose commitment to the importance of class analysis for understanding the conditions for challenging capitalist oppressions and the language within which debates are waged […] than a precise set of definitions and propositions.' (Wright 2005: 5)

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[20] The intersectional analysis highlighting the axis of race, class, gender, caste or/and nationality is prevalently employed in post-development studies (i.e. Escobar 1995). Barbara Heron describes how gender, race and bourgeoisie identities are constructed by Canadian development professionals through their overseas experiences (Heron 1999). Most notably in the Indian context, the class aspect is brought by Sangeeta Kamat in her study about NGOs working among the indigenous population in Kerala (Kamat 2002). What is more, Celayne Heaton Shrestra mentions how the middle class identity of development workers is negotiated in the interactions with the community of beneficiaries in Nepal (Heaton Shrestra 2006).

Recently, scholars who attempt to depart from Marxist class analysis draw on the theory of Pierre Bourdieu (see i.e. Liechty 2003; Saavala 2010; Lardinois & Thapan 2006). Again, the applicability of his work in the Indian context is debatable since various methodological and conceptual obstacles arise. Firstly, it is widely noted that Pierre Bourdieu was sensitive to the linking theory and research and thus he heavily depended on fieldwork data. Thus, any Bourdieu-inspired intellectual exercise should be performed with reverence for particular social, cultural and historical contexts. What is more, his findings simply cannot be applied to any social reality. Secondly, Bourdieu utilized data from both qualitative and quantitative techniques, combining them in a unique way that is, again, difficult to both repeat and follow (Weininger 2002: 120).

Another problem with class analysis arises from its heritage. It originated within the Western scholarly tradition and as such must be appropriately 'adjusted' to Indian social reality. What is more, the middle class is perceived differently in Indian and Western contexts; and most often scholars describe different classes in different countries (on the basis of presumably different cultural capitals employed in particular national settings). While in many 'developed' countries the middle class consists of the majority of the population, in India it is mainly the upper tier of society which therefore enjoys more privileges and ideological power that its Western counterpart (Deshpande 1997).[21]

That being said, I believe that the *shared* middle class self-identification of my respondents (and myself) cannot be easily ignored.[22] Thus, one must look at other factors which would possibly confirm the middle class status of development professionals as well. A few questions arise here. Other than self-identification, what are the indicators of middle-classness? If being a professional worker requires certain skills, are they related to the middle class status? Second, to what extent and in which ways does possessing these skills enable people to fill professional job positions in the NGO? Last but not least: in this sense class is understood as an (inter)subjectivist category (e.g. widely recognized, based on external and self- identifications), and – most importantly – as historically and culturally constructed (Ortner 1998: 4).

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[21] Noticeably, it is frequent to discuss the middle classes in 'national' settings (i.e. the French, British or Indian middle class), assuming that national identity and/or particular socio-cultural contexts provide particular kind(s) of cultural (and other non-material) capital.

[22] Although, it should be noted that middle class ideological power makes such self-identifications alluring (Deshpande 1997: 129).

THE RELEVANCE OF CULTURAL CAPITAL: COMPETENCES AND IDENTITIES

Following Satish Despande, I argue that a particular mix of competences constitutes an element of the cultural capital of the middle class. Similarly, Michele Lamont and Annette Lareau claim that cultural capital consists of cultural signals (e.g. 'widely shared […] attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods and credentials used for social and cultural exclusion'; Lamont & Lareau 1988: 156). Another element of middle-classness consists of identities such as 'caste, community, or region' (Deshpande 1997: 140–141, see also Bourdieu). I suggest that categories of race, gender, religion, nationality and caste might be considered the identities of which the class status of NGO employees is comprised rather than as class equivalents. This approach, however, bears some significant reservations in privileging class over other identities. It might result in too simplified an analysis of social processes. Therefore, in arguing that these categories are secondary to class (or more accurately – class is inclusive of these categories), one must hold to ethnographic evidences. I look at the points of entry to the organization. As already noticed, the employees (both permanent and interns) belonged to different (no) castes, religions, nationalities, and represented different gender and race identities, thus there is no indication that these factors either implicated higher rank, or prevented them from being hired in the organization. Conversely, these attributes appear rather as 'classificatory practices' (Fernandes 2011: 71).[23]

For instance, the only Western employees of the head office in Addi were interns. On the one hand, this indicates that the nationality of the employees, in addition to their experience, designated their position within the organization. On the other hand – as some of the interns were Indians – it implies that experience was more valued than one's nationality and that nationality alone neither impeded nor guaranteed entry into the NGO. Indicatively, one reason for the importance of national boundaries might be the Indian immigration policy – hiring a foreigner was obviously more difficult that hiring an Indian citizen. Appointing foreigners to permanent positions would create bureaucratic obstacles – such as obtaining a regular work permit – which were difficult to meet, particularly so because of the interns' relative lack of experience. In addition to a regular work permit, there was the possibility, regulated by

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[23] Interestingly, re-working these various categories within middle class identity might, at least partially, explain the decline of caste self-identification in urban settlements (Beteille 1996).

the Indian law, of obtaining a special work permit for volunteering. It was, however, commonly assumed that these were almost never granted. Therefore, the manual for interns issued by the organization in order to inform them about local conditions and requirements to meet before coming to India, included a paragraph advising them to apply for a tourist visa instead of a volunteer work permit. Even if technically the latter was legally required, the manual stated that most foreigners volunteered with tourist visas. They were also advised not to reveal the real purpose of their stay in India during the application process. The document concluded that an invitation letter from the Women's Foundation was thus not required.

The key to obtaining a position were rather particular competences and identities related to middle-classness. Preeti, a permanent employee, was born into a Brahmin, Bengali family and raised in Calcutta. We bonded almost immediately – or as soon as we learned about each other's similar life experiences. At the time I met her, her mother was pursuing a career at the United Nations (she was at one of the higher managerial positions), while her father was an important figure in the international banking world. Although her personal income was moderate (37000 INR a month), she stated that her family income was in a range of nine and more lakh a month. She perceived herself as middle-middle class, but her parents as upper-middle class.[24] With a B.A. in Psychology, and an M.B.A. in Media Management (specialization in Public Relations), she devoted herself to social work. She wrote her thesis about the reach and effectiveness of education campaigns in India. Despite her young age of 24, she possessed an extensive experience in the development sector:

> *from childhood I interned with a lot of organizations, from the age of 15 to the age of 23 I've done lots of internships in education […] in organizations which work in education and I've been a teacher for underprivileged children as well as developmentally handicapped.*

The peculiar axis of education, including the knowledge of English, made the professionals whom I met suitable candidates for a job in women's developmental non-governmental organizations. Thanks to the economic standing of their families they were privileged to obtain the required level of education,

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[24] Indians often position themselves on the scale of lower-middle-upper middle class which, most probably, reflects the popularity of this differentiation in popular discourse, especially after the economic liberalization in the early 90s and the growing visibility of the middle class since that time.

which, in turn, facilitated their finding a job in the sector. I believe that economic position combined with other forms of cultural assets were sine qua non for securing a professional position in the NGOs. This, in turn, helped and actually enabled members of this class to confirm and/or enhance their social standing. Thanks to the opportunities for promotion at work or simply thanks to the possibility of performing one's job – their middle class status was being not only validated, but also enhanced and re-created.

I argue that a professionalized and decentralized development sector gives preference to members of the middle class entering professional jobs in the NGOs. My argument becomes clearer when one looks closer at the process of recruitment for these positions. These were largely drawn from the package of suggestions delivered to the Women's Foundation by one of the biggest consulting corporations in the world: HR.[25] In order to achieve even greater accountability and transparency and to make the organization a trustworthy recipient of donors' money, on Feb 3rd[26] 2011 the organization signed an agreement with an international professional services firm – HR, division in India. According to this agreement, HR was to work on payroll services, developing special procedures of operation, as well as accounting and reporting on grants. In the area of human resources, HR's tasks were to diagnose and design the organization's functioning. In this regard, the organogram was created in order to simplify transfer of knowledge. It seems apparent that the Women's Foundation expended a great deal of effort in order to provide its employees with a clear reporting structure and as a consequence present itself as accountable to donors. The scope of work performed for the Women's Foundation by HR was valued considerably: the organization was to pay 600.000 INR for the help in reporting on using grants and 1.896.000 INR for the 'development of standard operating procedures'. Services of accounting and payroll were priced in a more detailed way, i.e. the organization was to spend 300 INR per employee per month for issuing a payroll, and 100.000 INR per month for HR manager supervising the account with two visits per week. HR was also involved in managing the employees' performance and designing human resources policies. The latter included detailed job descriptions. Graduate and post-graduate education was an obvious requirement for all professional positions in the organization. The HR's opinion on the role and requirements of education was clear: it was to be(come) a basic standard to appoint the most educated job candidates.

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[25] Mentioned in chapter 2 as well; name changed.
[26] Date changed.

Even though, as one might expect, there was no indication of specific names of higher education facilities that the organization's employees should have graduated from, it was assumed that it had to be a 'good' school. Preeti said:

Man, the school I went to… It was a reasonably good school, I think, there was nothing I really missed… but when I tell people that I graduated from there, they are all, like, wow, that is great, such a great school… It has a great reputation.

Job announcements were structured in a standardized way. They provided a job seeker with basic information about the type of organization, its goals, and with the link to the Women's Foundation's website for further information (if it was needed). It clearly stated the position title, as well as the location of work and the permanency of contract. Following, the candidate read the position summary, key responsibilities, key competencies, key results areas/ performance measures and the mode of applying. Not only was the language of the announcement formalized, advanced English, but – in case of the documents available to me – the desired level of education was post-graduate. Interestingly, empathy for the organization's goals was listed among key competencies. At the end of the announcement, one read that (s)he was required to submit a resume, references, a letter of motivation along with a writing sample via email. It again indicates that particular competences, related to formal education in English, were necessary to secure the position. Not mentioning that the mode of applying (email was a must) gave preference to candidates with computer skills and Internet access.

Although recruiting interns seemed to be less formal than recruiting permanent employees, certain requirements still had to be met. In order to apply one had to submit an application form available on the organization's website. It clearly stated that the interns' roles in the NGO was to *support* particular departments: the Communication & Networking, the Operations, the Monitoring, the Programs & Evaluation and/or the Field (for those who speak Hindi and/or Bengali). The acceptance of an application would be, most usually, followed by an interview on Skype or in person, depending on the applicant's location. The candidate had to list his or her academic education, volunteer experience, computer skills and languages known. Additionally, one had to answer questions about the kind of work (s)he was interested in doing, summarize his/her previous experience in relation to the position being applied for, as well as explain the ways in which working for the Women's Foundation would contribute to his/her professional and personal growth, and list his/her expectations.

Elisabeth, 27, was an intern from the US who came to India especially for the Women's Foundation internship. Her brother worked in the banking sector as a program designer. Describing her family, she said:

> *He [brother] travels a lot, nationally, a little bit of business and technology creative side… My mother is a property manager, so my family and some other investors own condominiums and some other properties and my mother does the macro management for them and my father used to own a music store and now he is doing like a management of the events for a mall. […] He has a marketing university degree, mother has a history degree, she was a history teacher. My brother has an engineering degree, I graduated university in business, human resource management degree, in 2006. Starting in high school, like, I've always loved travelling, I've always been very, very curious and so, I've always known that I wanted to join Peace Corp […], it just seemed like a really cool way to learn a language and to, just to be plunged into everything that was unknown and then it, like, made me really curious, so during the last year of university I applied and I went to North Africa, Morocco as a small business volunteer and basically I was like a liaison between the ministry, government ministry of […] Morocco, and a women's cooperative. They made […] embroideries and things and I worked with them to improve, or create, like accounting, computer classes, marketing, basic packaging, basic target market, target development, just different things and I taught English, I worked at kids camps so I did environment, just whatever came up.*

The Peace Corp was not Elisabeth's only volunteering experience before joining the Women's Foundation. She raised money in a bike ride across USA in 2009 which she called a 'powerful mental marathon'. In her free time she liked exercising, learning, reading, doing yoga, and hiking. She was able to cover the expenses related to fighting sex trafficking with the Women's Foundation with her savings gathered from teaching English in South Korea for two years.

Thus, similar assets – educational, linguistic and economic – and competences related to them enabled interns to act on behalf of the organization and to take part in (re)creating its policies. In case of the foreign interns[27], economic assets not only permitted them to pursue the adequate levels of education and experience, but also to devote a significant period of time[28] to live in India without remuneration for their work. Rychele, who spent almost

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[27] The group of interns consisted of both Indian and foreign nationals, including Americans of Indian descent.

[28] Most commonly a few months.

2 years working for anti-sex-trafficking organizations, raised money through private sponsors and eventually received a grant from an American governmental funding agency. These funds came in addition to her parents' financial support. In general, the interns decided – and were able to decide – to spend their savings or use financial support from their families in order to become a part of the anti-trafficking movement, and to experience the adventure of their lives. The costs of living in the south districts of Addi (which are considered to be some of the most expensive in the city): rent, utilities, transportation, eating in and out, as well as the costs of travelling in, to and from India – were covered by the interns[29], as the organization did not provide any financial assistance. Therefore, an appropriate social position in 'developed' countries provided them with an access to appropriate funds along with a proper education and knowledge of English.

Additionally, that Indians were preferred in the permanent positions becomes clear if one notices that the knowledge of local languages (Hindi and Bengali) was considered to be important in order to fully immerse oneself in the organization's activities. The manual for interns stated that it was suggested they work in those departments which did not need language skills other than English as the organization was not able to provide translational assistance.

Even in the divisions other than the Field, languages spoken and experience in the non-governmental sector were important factors in hiring employees. For instance, in a document prepared in Human Resources, candidates for a job interview are shortlisted. Among the categories describing the applicants, one can find previous NGO experience and knowledge of vernacular languages. Preeti claimed many times that her lack of a particular skill – namely, typing in Hindi – made it more difficult for her to perform her job. Nevertheless, the lack of this skill was not an obstacle in securing a position in the organization. Rather, it required certain adjustments in assigning responsibilities within the organization. Vacancies were posted on the organization's website (in English), as well as spread via personal networks. Therefore, in order to get to know about a job opportunity, one had to belong to a privileged group – either already know other professionals working in the sector or have access to the Internet and at least the basic skills of searching job opportunities. The very language of the job announcements

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[29] According to the information provided for interns by the organization before coming to India, a monthly cost of living in Addi (south part of the city, within 12 km of the office) was 30–35000 INR.

(including job description) was sophisticated enough to assume that a person seeking to apply had to possess certain skills in order to understand what was required. Therefore, the level of education as well as social skills enabled a person seeking to join the organization on a professional level to fully grasp the meaning of *key* words used in the job announcements.[30] Those who could not find themselves in this particular reality were simply left out – beyond the development sector or in lower positions, where their influence on the process of decision-making was less significant.

DIFFERENT CAPITAL(S)?

I was interested to show how the specificities of non-governmental organizations reinforce the assumption that the requirement to get and perform a leading job in this sector is to possess a certain cultural capital which consists of middle-classness. Along with the changing nature of development, the role of the middle class has changed. Even if development is not a dominant public discourse in India anymore, it remains an important feature of middle class identification in the light of neoliberal globalization. On the one hand – although it cannot be dismissed that the Indian middle class is diversified – those who occupy qualified positions in the third sector belong rather to 'the iconic figure […] of the urban, white-collar worker' (Baviskar & Ray 20011: 5). However this category seemed to be blurred, it pictures well the phenomena of shifting jobs from the government to the private sector due to economic liberalization. As we have seen, these processes did not omit the women and development sector. While earlier it was the government that implemented developmental programmes, since the late 1980s, along the dominant paradigm of privatization, state responsibilities in this area – although under strict supervision of government

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[30] Paradoxically, in order to picture itself as professional, the organization required that *every* worker submit a job application in the format of a standardized English CV. A quite surprising example is one of the office boys who submitted his resume in English. However, his ability to speak and understand this language was very restrained, as he knew only a few basic words and sometimes understood the general context. As a career objective he states: 'To work in a computer dynamic and global environment, provides scope for challenges and opportunities'. Nevertheless, in his case the resume was submitted after the hiring and in response to an administrative requirement. In fact, he was recruited to the organization through informal networks: his family ran an ironing stall on the same street where the organization was located and provided services to some of the organization's higher employees.

agendas – have been gradually relocated to private non-governmental organizations. Work in developmental organizations might be considered to be 'a new economy job' (Fernandes 2011: 71) as the NGOs boom provided the middle class with new job opportunities. Thus, decentralization and privatization benefit this particular strata of the Indian middle classes (see also Fernandes 2011: 67).

> 'At the structural level, the expansion of the upper tiers of these economic sectors has largely benefited English-speaking urban white-collar segments of the middle class, who are presented with new employment opportunities, particularly in private-sector employment.' (Fernandes 2011: 70)

On the other hand, many interns who play an assistive role in (re)creating organizations' programmes, enrich the cultural capital acquired in the Western context. I believe that analysing our class status as it is positioned within the societies of our respective countries of origin would prove both fruitless and problematic. Therefore, I turn to the investigation of our middle-classness while interning in the organizations, namely in the particular moment of interaction with the Indian development sector. In this context, I think that one should move toward the concepts of practicing middle-classness through various forms of tourist activities. Following Pierre Bourdieu, Ian Munt argues that the middle classes, hinging on a relative (in comparison with the upper classes) scarcity of economic capital, employ tourism as a classificatory practice (Munt 1994: 105–107; Featherstone 1987: 56). Travelling to India – the country where, as one of my American co-workers said, 'women are notoriously discriminated' – in order to fight sex trafficking appears as yet another adventure of middle class individuals. Yet, especially considering various adjustment obstacles related to the foreign interns' culture shock and a clear declaration of the noble cause, it cannot be seen merely as travelling for pleasure (Cohen 1979: 179). Rather, mobility is an element of a cultural capital.

> 'Volunteer tourism, coined 'voluntourism', is one of the major growth areas in contemporary tourism. This niche market is an inevitable consequence of a restless society, jaded from the homogeneous nature of traditional tourism products, and seeking alternative tourism experiences.' (Callanan & Thomas 2005: 181)

Natalia Bloch argues that this category ('tourists-activists') lies in between tourism and migration. The latter connotation, she argues, comes from the

fact of performing 'an actual work', although without remuneration (Bloch 2011: 8–9). To the contrary, I think that the lack of financial gratification from the organization is crucial here and should be seen as a sign of the interns' economic advantage and thus as an indicator of our middle class status. The professionalization of non-governmental organizations forces them to create a recruiting system for their employees-to-be that meets the inflated standards set by donors. This system, however, gives preference to middle class employment and training opportunities while the other identities of race, gender, caste or religion do not limit the access to this sector. Similarly, even if national boundaries influence one's positioning within the organization, they nevertheless do not prevent middle class individuals from becoming a part of it. Thus, non-governmental organizations appear as middle class enterprises, where the dominant culture is that of class (Spivak 2003: 618; 2004; Kapoor 2004: 630). They also provide a site for reinforcing cultural capital, even if initially acquired in different national contexts, into a translocal entity.

Chapter 4

THE OTHER AS A CLASS DISTINCTION

'1. Prostitution is a systemic form of violence against human beings. […]

2. Prostitution is not inevitable for poor women. […]

3. The prostitution system takes advantage of the absence of choice that girls and women are subjected due to gender, caste and class discrimination.' (Women's Foundation, 2009–2010)

In the previous chapter I argued that the basic requirement to meet in order to acquire a professional position in the women and development sector is middle class status. I was interested to show the ways in which the post-liberalization situation makes it feasible for this particular class to work in the NGO environment. Herein, I attempt to analyze the organizations and their employees in the context of the discourses in which they engaged themselves. A non-governmental organization is seen as a particular working place. Certain values are always undertaken to represent the public image of organizations and define their causes. In the case of the Women's Foundation and Shakti, this cause was based on the issues of sex trafficking and prostitution. Research on prostitution requires a large dose of sensitivity as prostitution is not only 'the world's oldest profession', but also a delicate social practice. On the one hand, it is immersed in potential suffering and abuse of sex workers. On the other hand, in potential misuses of those who represent them.

Thus, research on prostitution-related matters requires a 'critical perspective on difference and making visible the effects of constructed difference' (Hulusjö 2013: 183). A researcher who makes enquiries into prostitution-related issues faces two discourses which seem to be dominant in the international feminist debate. The first perspective assumes that sex work is a woman's choice and her right to express and define herself. The second one perceives prostitution

as an almost unconditional social evil and prostitutes as victims. It has been noted that both these stands are prone to essentionalization (Truong 1990: 13; Maksimowski 2012: 10). Not surprisingly, the organizations I worked with enmeshed themselves in this discussion as well.

I tend not to express my support for either side of this debate. Instead, I try to analyze how prostitution and sex industry are represented by the organizations and their employees. I draw upon the depiction of prostitutes as it is being negotiated within the organization through documents and the employees' opinions. This leads to the image of the Other based on the West-East dichotomy. I further argue that such an understanding brings a few limitations and thus a broader perspective of orientalism (which the concept of the Other originates from; Said 1979) is needed. In this endeavour, I attempt to follow the lead of Michał Buchowski and his 'spectre of orientalism' (Buchowski 2006). A closer examination of the differences between the organizations' employees and the Other that they represent suggests that the line between Them and Us is ultimately being (re)constructed and reinforced (within the organizations, as well as through their activities) along class divisions.

THE CAUSE, ITS UNDERSTANDING AND THE OTHER(S)

The organizations' policies were a mix of 'classic' women's questions realized through development tools.[1] Awareness-raising workshops, vocational trainings and self-help groups aiming at 'empowering' women were being applied. In addition, the organizations attempted to create an anti-trafficking movement in order to raise awareness about these issues and advocate towards changes in Indian law. Both Shakti and the Women's Foundation worked in the same slum area(s) of Addi, however, the latter also extended its activities to other parts of Addi and of India, including red light areas.[2] Their goals were set, respectively, at 'preventing' and 'ending' sex trafficking, but at the same time prostitution[3], as in everyday practices of the organizations the boundaries between these two issues were blurred. Let me illustrate this 'blurriness' with a conversation which I had with Neha, the President

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[1] As I mentioned in chapter 2.

[2] Most often I refer to the beneficiaries as 'the community', following the organizations' language.

[3] Although the issues concerning women in prostitution are often perceived as women's issues by default, it should be noted that in India prostitution is rather aside of the mainstream women's movement (Gangoli 2008).

of Shakti. One day, when we were coming back from the community, she decided to assign me to a new research task.

> Neha: *Find me a definition of sex trafficking which doesn't automatically imply that women have to be transferred or moved or smuggled.*
>
> Anna: *Like, you mean women in the community, that they work as prostitutes, but they were most often born and raised in the community? That they were never moved across the borders or so?*
>
> Neha: *Yes, I mean… You know, they are forced to do that. I need a definition which says that if women are forced to be prostitutes, that's already sex trafficking.*
>
> Anna: *But how do you know that it wasn't their decision? I mean, who forces them?*
>
> Neha: *I don't know… They must be coerced. Pimps. I guess their families… husbands, in-laws (?)…*

Neha could not believe that prostitution was the beneficiaries' own choice and thus she – trying to find a coercive element – was referring to the definition of human trafficking (of which sex trafficking is a part) in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime explains on its website (UNODC 2014) that human trafficking, according to the Protocol, must consists of three elements:

> 'The Act (What is done)
> Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons
> The Means (How it is done)
> Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim
> The Purpose (Why it is done)
> For the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices and the removal of organs',

while regulations on prostitution and its understanding remain within the purview of national policy (UNODC 2014). Thus, the validation of the official representation of the Women's Foundation and Shakti as anti-sex-trafficking came from the assumption that prostitution in the community is always coercive and as such it was a type of 'sex trafficking' without 'moving'. It has been noted that 'in India, much of the focus on prostitution has been through the entry point of harm, coercion and victimhood, especially where activists have concentrated on child prostitution' (Gangoli 2008: 27). Nevertheless,

while there are not many doubts about the coerciveness of sex trafficking, the issue depicted is more complicated in relation to prostitution.

Importantly, the assumption of the forceful and violent nature of sex work leads to an anti-legalization stand on this matter[4] (Gangoli 2008: 26–30). Thus, both organizations inscribe themselves in the ongoing debate about the advantages and disadvantages of legalizing prostitution (Gangoli 2008: 26–35; Cho, Dreher & Neumayer 2011; Munro & Giusta 2008). A document available on the Women's Foundation's website and related to one of the Canada-based organizations fighting sex trafficking and prostitution world-wide[5] makes clear the reasons for its anti-legalization and anti-decriminalization angle. Based on several studies, the author lists ten reasons why the legalization and decriminalization of prostitution cannot – in her opinion – be accepted. She argues that legalization not only raises the status of the people and institutions responsible for the sex industry's misuses, namely the pimps, customers, brothels and similar venues, but also promotes and expands the sex industry. It increases the number of street prostitutes as women are obligated by law to reveal their identities – thus they are more often stigmatized. It also boosts the number of child prostitutes. Contrary to what it promises, it leaves women without protection and does not provide them with better health care. What is more, it augments the demand as the lack of legal barriers marks prostitution as ethically acceptable. In addition to the document described hereby, the Women's Foundation was a supporter of the so-called Swedish model (which assumes that the customers, and not prostitutes, should be punished for buying sex). The organization attempted to launch a movement towards implementing the Swedish model. The campaign, lobbying for appropriate changes of the Indian law, was supported by internationally-known Western feminists[6], and sparked the news not only in India, but also in the US.

As my goal herein is not to discuss whether prostitution should be legalized, decriminalised or whether the law should be further exacerbated, I focus on the statements which are the most important in light of further reasoning. First of all, this declaration states that women simply do not want to be prostitutes. This assertion ignores the voices of the other side of the discussion,

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[4] It should be noted that the anti-legalization stand might also be drawn on the basis of the argument that legalization would cause spreading prostitution outside the red light areas, therefore making it more difficult to control (Gangoli 2008: 29).

[5] It is also based on the book by Janice G. Raymond (2013).

[6] Again, in order to protect the organization's anonymity, I do not provide the names of those feminists.

among whom one can find some of the sex workers themselves – for instance, the *Sex Workers' Manifesto* issued by the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee collective[7] in 1997 (Durbar 1997). This point was also noticed in the public debate I mentioned above[8]; however – contrary to my findings – the Western feminists were to be blamed for this approach. Second of all, the document that the Women's Foundation refers to clearly states that the choice of *most women* to go into prostitution was not 'rational' as it came out of the lack of other choices available. Therefore, women in prostitution must adjust to the conditions of inequality and customers' wishes. I argue that such understanding arises from a particular construct of 'women in prostitution'.

In the Women's Foundation's jargon women beneficiaries were represented in various terms, but each of them implied particular characteristics and denoted a perception of prostitution itself. 'Sex worker' could be sometimes heard in the organization's office, but it was rather unwelcome. One of the interns felt that it was necessary to excuse herself for using it. By using this term, she suggested that prostitution might be seen as 'work', which implies that it is an accepted way of creating economic gain, and that prostitution is just one of the regular occupations. An alternative word, 'prostitute'[9] – although employed in some of the documents – was considered to be inadequately soft. It was stressed that applying the term 'prostituted woman' would be the most desirable, as it explicitly implies that the women are *coerced* into prostitution. Thus, it was assumed that very rarely do women choose themselves to become prostitutes. Most usually, there is someone or something that influences this decision.[10] Furthermore, many of the Women's Foundation's documents referred to prostitutes as Women in Prostitution[11] and Women at Risk (more often with abbreviations, respectively: WIP and WAR) and Vulnerable women. The second category consists

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[7] Paradoxically, the collective operates in one of the areas targeted by the Women's Foundation. It is also worth noting that the first organizations of women in prostitution which garnered public attention in the late 90s represented themselves as sex workers' initiatives (Datta 2008: 265).

[8] A few years after I completed my fieldwork.

[9] I do not take a stand on any side of this debate, therefore I use the terms 'sex worker', 'prostitute', 'prostitution' and 'sex work' alternatively, as the most commonly employed. However, I restrain myself from using the expression 'prostituted women', as I find it too biased.

[10] As I illustrated with the example of my conversation with Neha on the differences (or the lack of them) between sex trafficking and prostitution.

[11] It is argued that '*women in prostitution*, both […] give[s] space to those who don't see sex work as work, and because this term enables women in prostitution to claim multiple, fluid, shifting identities' (Datta 2008: 266). From a further analysis of the meanings being given to this term in the organizations I cooperated with, it seems that this does apply to them.

of women and girls who are the daughters of Women in Prostitution, those who live in and nearby brothel areas, as well as women and girls from the communities and tribes with inter-generational prostitution. The last one, Vulnerable women and girls, are those from Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Other Backward Castes who were additionally excluded due to, among others, famine, conflict, migration or *poverty*' (emphasis mine).

Significantly, according to my co-workers, all prostitutes from the communities targeted belonged to the category of prostituted women. Aisha, answering my question whether all women have not made the decision of entering prostitution themselves, disagreed. When I asked her to specify, she said: 'No, I think there are some women in prostitution because they really want to. It's just we don't deal with them.' Her opinion was confirmed by Dina who, when I inquired whether she heard any women beneficiaries admitting to liking their job, replied that even if she could imagine hearing such a declaration, she would rather not believe that it was sincere. Although in the interviews that I conducted with the prostitutes targeted by Shakti I was told that some of them 'enjoy sex', 'don't think that their job is dangerous', 'like to work with their friends', 'like to feel attractive'[12], I do not try to confirm whether these statements were truthful.[13] Nevertheless, it should be noted that these claims might be a strategy employed by those women to distance themselves from the stigmatizing burden of prostitution and to counteract the dominant discourse on their unavoidable dehumanization (Hulusjö 2013: 179–182). Hence, I merely attempt at (re)constructing the representation of the women and communities targeted by the organization as it emerges from the latter's employees' opinions and documents.

I believe that this presumed lack of sincerity ensued from a particular picture of the women beneficiaries. As I already mentioned, Shakti and the Women's Foundation conducted their activities in similar areas in Addi among their 'target beneficiaries'. Let me shed some light on those. First, it might be important to note that there is a scarcity of external sources which describe the issues of these concrete groups. Therefore the account presented here shows mostly the beliefs and opinions of the NGOs' professionals working with them and the studies they have conducted. As limiting the discussion to their point of view might seem a rather controversial

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[12] As provided by the interpreter.

[13] For an ethnographical account of prostitution in India see for instance Anuja Agrawal (2008). There is also a study conducted by the Women's Foundation which I quote herein, and another study by Shakti which I co-authored.

move, I argue it is justified on the basis that this book is devoted to the practices of middle-class employees, occupying positions in head offices. Therefore, it is not aimed at presenting the 'objective' situation of the community of beneficiaries. It is also not aimed at assessing the 'real' needs of community members, and – in such context – at showing the rights and wrongs of the organizations' workers. The goal is to present the construct of the community and the uses of this construct by the organizations and their employees.

The NGOs worked or planned to work in the area of three villages[14] located in the south-west of Addi. They were inhabited by members of the same scheduled castes and tribes for whom traditional occupations were snake charming and/or pasturage. The ban on snake charming and the urbanization deprived those communities of their livelihood. In search of work, they moved from the rural areas of Rajasthan and settled down in the outskirts of Addi. However, it did not improve their economic situation. To the contrary, inhabiting illegal colonies, without an access to running water, drainage and other basic amenities, and constant fear of eviction, actually deteriorated their position. As a result of the lack of means of living, married women of these communities were pushed into prostitution by their families-in-law. It happened according to a similar scenario: the family of the groom, obligated to pay bride price, attempted to claim it back from the bride. Therefore, when she customarily moved to her in-laws' house after marriage, she was gradually being forced to work as a prostitute. In this way women in prostitution contributed (according to the employees' narrative) to the majority of household earnings. Husbands were considered to be lazy drunkards and pimps.

What is more, as we have seen from the categories of women distinguished in the organizations' language, not all women targeted by the organizations were engaged in prostitution. To the contrary, the survey conducted by the Women's Foundation which was aimed at understanding the community's problems more comprehensively and aiding in the measuring of the effectiveness of implemented programs reveals that the majority of them were vulnerable and at risk. Of the 249 women included in this study[15], only 12%

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[14] During my stays, it was one for Shakti and two for the Women's Foundation respectively. However, the Women's Foundation used to cover the area of Shakti's activities and planned its further expansion there. In case of the Women's Foundation, the activities reached communities of prostitutes and red light areas in different parts of India.

[15] Women who took part in the study were based in Addi, Bihar and Calcutta. Unfortunately, I was informed that no study has been conducted by the Women's Foundation among the Addi community alone (by that time), so the information provided here is merely illustrative.

belonged to the category of Women in Prostitution, while for 6,4% of them
the primary source of family income came from prostitution. Even though
76% of the women confirmed they would change their occupation if they
were offered an alternative opportunity, it was not specified what their jobs
were at the moment of the research (considering the fact that only 12% of the
respondents were prostitutes). In contrast, the data gathered in Shakti's oper-
ational area showed that although in the 70s only four or five families were
engaged in prostitution, this number increased to 70% of women and ado-
lescent girls at the present time. As this information comes from our liaison,
Rahul, who claimed that estimate on the basis of 'old people knowledge', it
could be considered as unverified, and thus it can be easily concluded that
both organizations, ironically, fought mostly against the very idea of women
becoming prostitutes.

However, this kind of guileful endeavour is unnecessary, if one looks
closer at the picture of women and their families in the community which
emerges from the analysis of the factors for prostitution. Among these
factors, Shakti emphasizes poverty as a crucial one, and further speci-
fies them as: low level or no education; lack of skills; no access to sanita-
tion and health; living in a slum area which increases the women's sense
of insecurity and marginalization; tradition (namely child marriage and
bride price); stigma which ultimately leads to marginalization; powerless-
ness; pressure and expectations from the family of in-laws through 'subtle
coercion'[16], as well as a tendency to 'fatalistic attitude'. In this regard, the
Women's Foundation presents a similar approach. As it is stated in one of
the projects, women who live in areas lacking alternatives and those who
are extremely poor can be easily lured into trafficking.

This image portrays a woman as a poor victim of violent patriarchal oppres-
sion. The lack of formal education and appropriate skills makes her particu-
larly prone to coercion (even if 'subtle' as in the case of Shakti's view). Pres-
sured by her in-laws and/or husband to repay her bride price, she is able to do
nothing but 'sell her body'. Additionally, she is also influenced by her friends
and neighbours who are involved in prostitution. The higher economic status
of the latter must be tempting for a young, illiterate, uneducated and naïve
woman. Ultimately, she is 'unable to take control of [her] own [life]' (accord-
ing to Shakti documents). If she enjoys her work, she is 'seen to be suffering

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16 I do not try to prove that these practices are not actual factors for prostitution; the purpose of listing
    them is rather to present the understanding of community problems by Shakti, the Women's Foun-
    dation and their employees.

from false consciousness' (Gangoli 2008: 27). The ultimate blame for 'prostituting' these 'poor victims' is always on the family or pimps who *force* prostitutes, and the customers who *use* them. This image 'conflates women and children and infantilizes women' (Gangoli 2008: 28), demonizes their families and customers, and thus denies their agency. In creating organization documents, launching the advocacy movement, providing media coverage, designing and implementing programmes in the community, we have been actively depicting (and claiming the right to depict) the women beneficiaries and their families. Consequently, by (re)using the picture of the 'Community Other' we represented them to the outside world, and therefore exercised actual influence over them.

The critique of the picture briefly presented above might be interpreted as this of the 'Third World woman' picture (Mohanty 1984). Similarly to white Western feminists writing about the 'women of the Third World', the employees describe women beneficiaries as a homogenous group, where every woman possesses the same qualities, or more accurately – a lack of those. She is a poor, uneducated victim, unintentionally, inertly subjugated to patriarchal oppression. Neither is she resistant to power structures, nor speaks for herself. If she does, her voice is marked as inaccurate and thus unimportant. As an indifferent object, political, economic and historical processes pass her by. She thus embodies 'Third World difference':

> 'third world women as a group or category are automatically and necessarily defined as: religious (read: "non progressive", family-oriented (read "traditional"), legal minors (read 'they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights"), illiterate (read "ignorant"), domestic (read "backward") and sometimes revolutionary (read "their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war-they-must-fight!"). This is how "third world difference" is produced.' (Mohanty 1984: 352)

In the case of Shakti and the Women's Foundation the obvious shortcoming of this interpretation comes from the simple fact that these organizations represented not only Indian *women*, but also *men* in a similar way. Customers were perceived as violent and ignorant, as well as the male part of the prostitutes' families. Hence – by recreating 'Third World difference' – this explanation would reinforce the very same practice that it attempts to criticize.

Furthermore, Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that creating 'third world difference' is taking place under the assumption that the 'Third World' is relatively underdeveloped in comparison to the 'First World' (Mohanty 1984: 352).

This again corresponds with the description of the community of beneficiaries by the organizations: ignorant, backward, illiterate, with a lack of basic amenities and scarcely educated. What is more, the organizations' goals aim at uplifting the position of these poor masses of prostitutes and their families. Both of them, through recognizing poverty as one of the main reasons for prostitution and implementing programmes intended for economic, political, and educational betterment of the poor, encompass women and development issues. Similar to the imperialistic influence of Western feminists on non-governmental organizations in the 'Third World', one should consider an analogous kind of impact on development discourse. Arturo Escobar argues that after the Second World War:

> 'A type of development was promoted which confronted to the ideas and expectations of the affluent West, to that the Western countries judged to be normal course of evolution and progress […], by conceptualizing progress in such terms, this development strategy became a powerful instrument for normalizing the world.' (Escobar 1995: 26)

Accordingly, Western women should be perceived 'in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decision' (Mohanty 1984: 56).

My fieldwork indicates that the foreign interns at the Women's Foundation to some extent internalized this account based on the contrast between the West and the East. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, comments about the horrifying discriminatory practices which subsist in India appeared frequently in their conversations. They were content to be born or raised in the West, which left them untouched by many social evils (such as coercive prostitution, poverty, difficult access to education and rigid family and religious traditions) which 'Indian women' had to fight on a daily basis. What is more, not only were Indian women perceived as discriminated against and backward, but Indian men were also perceived as backward, ignorant and abusive. If Indian women were discriminated against, it was Indian men who exploited them. Thus the situation that they came to India to fight with was the problem of the whole Indian society. In this sense, the foreign interns became a part of imperialist development discourse as well as biased Western feminism, where the dichotomy of the 'developed and modern West' and 'undeveloped and backward East' is so commonly deployed. It would seem correct to assume that by working in Indian NGOs they simply perpetuated inequalities and

prejudices inscribed in this dichotomy. However, such assumption becomes problematic if one examines closer the understating of the very category of the 'Indian women' by those interns.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the foreign interns seemed not to include the Indian employees in their perception of Indian society and its evils. Nor did it occur to them that their Indian friends outside of the development sector might have been a part of the 'Indian society' which in their conversations was to be blamed for the problem of discrimination in India. Illustrative of that might be an example of one of our lunch-time conversations. As was usual, we gathered in the conference room to spend our break together. We squeezed around the glass table and eagerly talked and tasted each other's food. This time it was Arjun who again prepared something really delicious. He enjoyed cooking and, as his wife and daughter lived in another city, this was also his way of spending lonely evenings. To be honest, Arjun's love for cooking and food was not difficult to guess if one looked at his posture. He was rather plump, although he did not seem to be unhappy about that. Rychele was sitting on the other side of the table and she was the centre of attention that afternoon. She had come back from Kolkata an evening before, so she shared her impressions from this trip. Rychele many times declared her love for India. However, her relationship with this country seemed to be rather uneasy and complicated. Her excitement grew every time when she succeeded in solving some everyday problems. Everyone was listening to her: not only because her story appeared interesting, but also because her excitement was reflected in her raised voice. She recounted how a hotel owner chased her after she had refused to pay for the night that she had spent in his premises. She further claimed that when the hotel owner with his employees managed to stop her eventually, they pushed her down to the ground and beat her up. Lying there, unable to move and defend herself, she just screamed: 'I'm American! Police! I'm American!', probably hoping that her nationality would stop the attackers. Fortunately, she did not get seriously hurt, although it was not clear whether it was her passport that prevented it. As the story was disturbing to many of us, we expressed our outrage at the attackers and concern for Rychele's well-being, and asked her a few additional questions. Preeti wanted to know why Rychele did not pay for her hotel room in the first place. If she did, Preeti, continued, nothing like that would have happened. Rychele replied:

Oh, this hotel was just terrible! I paid in advance for 2 nights, but then I wanted the hotel manager to decrease the fee, it was so horrible, this room… But he didn't,

so I stayed there one night longer and I wanted it to be for free… Everything was so dirty! Cockroaches! And I couldn't sleep there even for a second, it was so loud… And the bathroom, you know! It looked as if some dirty, fat, old Indian guy just have had a very good time in there!!

Having heard that, some of us gingerly glanced at Arjun. He was in his early fifties, Indian, and as I mentioned – rather plump. I think that his face crunched for a second (although it might have been just my imagination), but after that he continued talking and laughing with everyone. After a little pause, some of us just changed the subject and talked in small groups, while others continued questioning Rychele about her trip. However, after lunch it became clear that Rychele's small speech made some impact. In backstage conversations, some of the employees expressed their discontent with her comment. However, they were mostly agitated by her insensitivity for Arjun's feelings. They tried to explain her behaviour by assuming that she did not fully realize that Arjun was overweight and older than she was. They understood that Rychele was not *actually* referring to Arjun. None of them, however, mentioned the fact that Arjun was also an Indian. I believe this is because they did not perceive him as such. If someone was a 'dirty Indian', it was someone not related to the employees. Rather, it was someone poor, a distant figure regularly passed by in the streets. Those Indian men were the customers of prostitutes. Those Indian men were responsible for discrimination, just like those Indian women were passive victims, subjected to discrimination. Thus, if the construct of 'Indian-ness' becomes more complicated, similarly the concept of 'the West' appears to be blurred.

Even more so if one considers other comments which came as a result of Rychele's story. To the employees of the organization, she not only presented herself as insensitive towards Arjun, but also – to a few of my Indian co-workers – she appeared as a liar. Preeti, Dina and myself, passionately discussed the part of Rychele's story in which she was attacked by the hotel owner and his employees. Preeti firmly stated:

I cannot believe that it happened. Kolkata people are not like that. They would have helped her, I cannot believe that they would attack a woman in the street! It's just, they are not like that over there… Maybe it could happen in Addi, in one of the slum areas…

Dina agreed. Herein, again we can see how the category of 'Indian' is made vague. For the Indian employees, there are 'other Indians' in Kolkata and 'other Indians' in Addi, as well as 'other Indians' in slum and residential areas. For the foreign interns, there are 'other people' in the organization and 'other people' in the community. Adding to that, the category of 'the West' emerges as problematic in relation to my status in the organization. As I mentioned in the introduction, I was the only employee who came from 'the Second World', neither 'the West' nor 'the East'. It seemed that for my co-workers Poland was a rather 'exotic' country. A few of them had heard about Lech Wałęsa, Chopin or the Polish Pope, but except for that did not have much information about my country, and in most cases I was the first Pole they have encountered. The American interns introduced themselves referring to the particular state they came from, for instance 'Chloe from Minnesota'[17]; obviously, when I jokingly said that I am 'Anna from Podlasie' (one of the regions in Poland), no one knew what I meant. However, for both Indians and foreigners I was somewhere 'in between'. On the one hand, I was explicitly told by a few Indian employees that I was *more like we are... not the same, but you understand more about India than the Americans....* On the other hand, the foreign interns sometimes excluded me from their perception of 'the West', sometimes included me in it. In the first case, for instance, I could not be an interesting partner in the conversations about Western movies, TV series and actors who did not reach my cultural realm – partially because of the context in which I was raised. The second case might be illustrated with a conversation which I had with one of the American interns, Chloe, who was educated in sociology. We once had a discussion about 'the West', 'the East' and women discrimination:

Anna: *You know, sometimes when you say that women who are not from the West are discriminated, I feel kind of offended...*
Chloe: *What do you mean?*
Anna: *Well, technically speaking, coming from Poland, I'm from the East myself. So when you say all these things, it's like you were saying that the whole Polish society discriminates women...*
Chloe: *Oh, Anna, but you know what we mean...*

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17 Not 'Chloe from the U.S.'.

Actually, I did not. Who was Western, and who was Eastern[18]? Who was a good Indian not capable of hurting a woman, and who was a bad Indian kicking a helpless lady in the street? Who was a dirty and fat Indian, and who was a clean and skinny Indian? Who was a prostitute able to make 'rational' decisions, and who was a powerless prostitute, victim of patriarchal oppression? Was I from 'the West', or was I from 'the East'? Who were 'Us', and who were 'Them'? It seems that not only prostitutes, their families and pimps belonged to the category of the backward, poor, discriminated and ignorant Other.

MOVING BEYOND THE WEST–EAST DICHOTOMY

Our work in the NGOs gave us the opportunity to represent and speak on behalf of the community of beneficiaries. It seems reasonable to assume that because of the power that we exercised over the community – 'the Community Other' – it is the most important Other in the context of further analysis. As I have shown earlier, the prostitutes, their families and middlemen involved in the sex industry are perceived (and hence represented) along certain characteristics: uneducated, poor, backward, ignorant. However, at the same time it is not clear why the same characteristics are employed in the descriptions of people outside of the community. What is more, one cannot assume that the community constitutes the 'Indian Other' – based on the East-West divide – as this category does not include the Indians who work in the organizations or those from the employees' social and family circles. Both of these practices: labelling different groups with the same categories, and vague rules of labelling those who are Western and those who are Eastern, encourage a further exploration of the Other. In this context, it seems that pursuing the analysis along the West-East divide would be rather limiting. By omitting the internal dynamics of (re)constructing the Other and its interpretations, it would be prone to essentialization. This analytical problem obviously arises from the rigid understanding of orientalism as a way of hegemonic representation of the Orient (the East) by the Occident (the West), 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience' (Said 1978: 2).

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[18] I have used the notion of 'the East' for rhetorical purposes.

'The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet […] this Orient is [not] merely imaginative.' (Said 1978: 2–3)

Edward Said describes the project of imaginative geography in which, by various discursive practices, the East – along with its people, places, institutions and cultural practices – is being (re)invented and (re)presented by the West (Said 1978). If we agree that the fact that the organizations are located in India (meaning: 'the Third World' or 'the East') is indicative, we strictly follow the categories of West and East as they are constructed in development discourse. Thus, such an exercise would not only be questionable in the light of the deliberations heretofore, but it would also be practicing orientalism, instead of deconstructing its practices. Hence, the limits of orientalism must be extended[19], despite the *actual* geographical location in which the practices of othering take place. I surmise that in order to achieve that, one should first look closer at the specific work environment of the NGOs. Firstly, this move allows one to emphasize the significance of constructing the Other through and within the non-governmental organizations. Secondly, it enables one to fully grasp the dynamics between Them and Us and understand the conditions and the reasons for which this dichotomy is being practised.

It has been argued that non-governmental organizations constitute a particular work setting as they are 'values-based organizations: dependent on values for their identity, their legitimacy, and by extension survival' (Jakimow 2010: 548). The values provide NGOs with a 'separate identity' (Ibid.) which allows for their claim to be seen as the representatives of civil society, and an alternative to the market and state (Jakimow 2010: 549; Fowler 2000: 589–598; Edwards & Hulme 1996). What is more, these values help NGOs to position themselves among 'other development actors' (Jakimow 2010: 549; Hailey 2000: 402). As it was shown in the previous subsection, both Shakti and the Women's Foundation expended a lot of effort to represent themselves to the outside world as organizations whose *modus operandi* is based on particular values. They both directed their activities to, at least declaratively, preventing and ending prostitution and sex trafficking.

However, was this cause internalized by the organizations' employees? For many of my co-workers, working in the NGO was motivated by both career and charity; yet they believed in the noble cause, or even that the job was a mission to change the world. Preeti says:

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[19] In doing so, I follow the lead of Michał Buchowski (2006).

My work in the NGO is a mission – to bring up change in the world, and it is a job only secondary. Honestly, […] I'm in the development sector, because I believe that the population of India is currently considered marginalized […].

It hardly comes as a surprise that the foreign interns who came to work on behalf of the Women's Foundation were rather enthusiastic about this opportunity in their lives.[20] The decision to join the organization was preceded by a process of careful planning, and their motivation to 'help the discriminated' in a distant country were firm. Many of them were inspired – as they mentioned in their application forms, as well as in various conversations – by a bestselling book.[21] Ryia, the intern of Indian descent raised in the US, came up with the idea of writing a thankful letter to the authors of this book. She encourages the other interns in her email:

'Hey guys,
so we're writing a letter to [the author] about how much we appreciate his book, [the book's title]! Another intern, [name], and I talked to [the President] for a few brief moments about how many of the interns came to work at [the Women's Foundation] because of [this book] and she said that she'll send a letter to him. Basically the gist of the letter will be about how much of an impact the book had for us and generally thanking him (and [the co-author]) for his work. So if you want your name signed or have anything you'd like to add in the letter, please let me know!
Hope you all are well! keep in touch!'

Importantly, the organization also made sure that an understanding – at least a declarative one – of certain basic concepts of the developmental and anti-trafficking world would be a part of the interns' curricula. This was achieved by the requirement to sign a statement by which one obligated him/herself to read international documents on these issues: the UNICEF code of conduct with regard to child protection and child rights, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and follow their

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[20] Excluding myself, as my political views resulted in a less than enthusiastic attitude to the cooperation with Shakti and the Women's Foundation.
[21] Again, in order to protect the organization and its employees' privacy, I do not give a reference to this book.

principles in the their work. Declarations of commitment to the organization's cause were more than welcome from the permanent employees as well.

One afternoon I was sitting in the office with Dina – we were both typing on computers, focused on our work. Our desks were situated in a passage to the kitchen, and Sevita passed by to grab some water. She was visibly disturbed, so Dina asked her what was the matter. Sevita confessed that she was just interviewing a candidate for a vacancy in the organization and she was outraged by the fact that this person openly admitted to being in favour of the legalization of prostitution. The candidate claimed that legalizing prostitution was a method of STD prevention. Sevita was so disgusted by this comment that she could not 'listen to it any more'. Both women claimed passionately that support for the cause (meaning: anti-legalization of prostitution) was a necessary requirement to work in the organization.

Although the level of excitement about the organization's cause differed from employee to employee, I encountered only one voice not agreeing with the general vision and mission of the Women's Foundation.[22] The expressions of support for the organization's cause were passionate even in unfavourable circumstances. It was a late Wednesday night when I was sleeping over at Preeti's. It was the night of the mandatory Skype conference for the organization's President and the employees in higher positions (including my friend). We were having a mini-party – had already had some beers, Preeti was also smoking marijuana, myself – cigarettes. She (as well as the others) perceived these conversations as highly annoying. I was soon to fully understand why. The conference took four hours. The employees were tired – not only had they spent the whole day in the office, but also survived a considerable amount of time in Addi traffic jams on their way home. The President, Pryianka, expected each of them to report on current job tasks. After a brief presentation by a particular employee, she commented, gave advice (or – as some called it – orders) and lectured her subordinates on how to perform their jobs. She was involved in every detail of the organization' s work.[23] While she talked, the others were silent. As far as I was informed, Sevita was putting her boys to bed and Arjun was cooking lunch for the next day. Preeti muted

[22] Ironically, it was the Head of Finance, Aakash, who on the condition of keeping it a secret, shared with me that in his opinion it was not impossible for sex workers in the community of beneficiaries to enjoy their work, especially with some of the clients, and that the only reason for the organization's existence was that of economic gain.

[23] This example illustrates the hierarchical structure of the Women's Foundation, which I discussed in chapter 3.

her microphone and turned it back on only when it was her turn to speak.[24] Altogether she did not talk for longer than 10 minutes. I remember that the only moment when Preeti spoke with passion – despite a significant amount of marijuana smoked – was when Pryianka suggested establishing a canon of compulsory readings for the employees and interns to assure that all of them shared similar values, in line with the organization's policies.

Given this particular engagement, which characterizes the NGOs environment, I surmise that (re)constructing the Other as a poor victim of patriarchal oppression bears certain consequences not only for the representation of the sex industry, but also for the employees themselves. One more glance at the values around which the employees are united is needed to fully understand this correlation. These values unavoidably oscillate around the question of women's and men's rights in expressing their own sexuality. One of the reasons why the organizations were involved in working with the issue of prostitution was their belief that poor women necessarily lack the ability to validly, consciously and truthfully express their actual needs and wishes. Similarly, poor men were seen as violent aggressors who enjoy non-consensual sex (customers) and taking advantage of women (pimps, husbands, brothers, fathers-in-law). What is more, poor women were also deprived of any sense of decency or just ignorant and cynical, as after surviving the nightmare of prostitution themselves, they coerced their daughters-in-law to prostitute their bodies. Consequently, the poor were denied the very ability to freely and adequately arbitrate about rights and wrongs. In contrast, the employees of the organizations were perceived as fully capable of deciding on their sexualities. Rychele talked passionately about her first homosexual experience which she had with one of the other interns. After the latter left the organization, they still remained in quite regular touch. In spite of Rychele's requests to keep her romance a secret, the latter was rather open to many. In another example, Chloe enjoyed a *ménàge a trois* with her flatmate and the latter's boyfriend until he got violent and forced her to perform oral sex on him. She felt that this whole experience was quite adventurous, thus asked for discretion. What is more, one of female Indian employees was delegated to another place, where she met an interesting and handsome man, and she spent a few days on passionate sex with him. She

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[24] In this way, I was able to listen to the Skype conference. As an intern, I was not invited to participate or even to listen to the conversation. Perhaps the permission would be granted if I asked for it, however, my host decided not to do it. As a result, my presence there remained a secret from my co-workers.

knew that their relationship was not to last, nevertheless she thought it was a nice break from her everyday life. She said: *I know I might seem slutty and we have no future together, but it was so nice to feel attractive.* Dina had a different attitude than Preeti, as she experienced her first sexual intercourse with her husband. Before marriage she kissed her boyfriend of that time, but seemed rather embarrassed while confessing it. I heard Aakash making jokes about his sexually open life style. These stories, however, present different attitudes to one's sexuality and sexual practices, and indicate that in contrast to poor women, my co-workers were capable of deciding about their sexual behaviour. They were educated and knowledgeable enough to consciously decide about their lives.

In constructing these differences, orientalism should be understood as '*a way of thinking about and practices of making the other* as well as a *set of mind* that creates *social distinctions*' (Buchowski 2006: 466, emphasis original). As a result, the category of the Other cuts across the national borders, caste[25], gender or ethnic lines. Even if the employees of the organizations (re)create concepts and ideas which they acquire from international development and feminist discourses, they do so not because the latter simply belong to Western intellectual and material heritage, but because they belong to and constitute their middle class identity. In her discussion about this strain of Indian feminism, which stands against prostitution, Geetanjali Gangoli notes that:

> 'this position creates an artificial and forced distinction between the East and the West. The West is projected as immoral, a geographical entity where women enter prostitution voluntarily. In contrast, the East – represented by India – is a space where women give up their 'honour' reluctantly if at all. Within this discourse, women whose experiences do not fit into the saga of kidnapping, suffering and coercion are marginalized.' (Gangoli 2008: 28)

However, we might see that in case of Shakti and the Women's Foundation, middle class women's sex was seen as acceptable and consensual, while the lower classes' sex was coercive and immoral by default. For the employees

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[25] Firstly, that foreigners of other than Indian descent who worked in the organizations did not obviously belong to any caste. Secondly, in the organizations alone the Indians were of various castes. Thirdly, indicative might be a study conducted by the Women's Foundation and mentioned briefly above. According to it, out of 249 respondents, Schedule Castes and Other Backward Castes accounted for 39% and 28% respectively, while Scheduled Tribes and the 'Other' category represented 1.5% and 32% of the sample. See also Geetanjali Gangoli (2008: 29).

of the organizations, sex became a lifestyle choice which they were able to make as rightful members of the modern parts of Indian (Srivastava 2007: 304) or Western societies. Considering the similar expressions of sexuality by both foreigners and Indians in the organization, I argue that economic and cultural capitals were integral to identity making. Those were middle class members who entertained the right of decision-making. They were 'modern', educated, literate and relatively well-off. If we understand the construction of the Other along class lines, 'violent people from Addi slum areas' complete the picture. They were poor, and therefore capable of attacking a defence-less woman in the street. The middle class perpetuates an imperialist vision of sexual relations among the poor; however, they do so not because they blindly follow the ideas of international discourses, but because by actively (re)creating and implementing these categories they actually reinforce their own cultural capital.

Last but not least, we must look at two processes which have been touched upon on these pages, but not adequately explained. Both are related to the internal relations within the organizations. First of all, it should be noted that the sexual encounters of the employees were discussed rather reluctantly and getting to know about them required a certain degree of friendship with the person sharing her stories. I believe that this reluctance to share with too many of their co-workers ensued from the line drawn between their professional and private lives. Thus, sharing was reserved for the closest co-workers, who were chosen to be befriended. This, however, might have been related to a desire for appropriate self-representation within the organization. In order to fully understand that, we must once again come back to the issue of values that the organizations and their employees strive to represent in their public attire. As Tanya Jakimow put it: 'Values are the articulations that show adherence to acceptable modes of behavior and adherence to social norms' (Jakimow 2010: 549). By picturing themselves as noble and value-based, the organizations distinguish themselves from market and state institutions. In this way, they justify their very existence and mark their uniqueness; in turn they endeavor to appear as accountable to their (potential) donors and the society as a whole (Jakimow 2010: 549). This puts a certain pressure on the employees as well. They share their sexual stories with chosen co-workers only, but this might be their strategy to live up to the role designed for them in their work environment. It reveals one of the anxieties related to retaining social status while working in the NGO (Jakimow 2010: 556). Middle class position is not given, to the contrary – it must be reworked in everyday practices, including those of the work place.

Second of all, I believe that it is important to once again mention the differences between the foreign and Indian employees of the organizations. As I stated before, it was not entirely clear within the organization who belonged to the East, and who belonged to the West. That both these categories were being employed points to internal tensions between the employees. Indeed, in this case it seems that internal Otherness in the NGOs was re-worked on the basis of the Orient-Occident divide. However, I argue that the very fact of the workers uniting for a common cause in the NGO environment, as well as their shared perceptions of the poor and marginalized, indicate that class distinction was the vital one in (re)creating Otherness. If the West-East dichotomy mattered, it did so within the organizations, and thus constituted an element of class identity.

To sum up, while constructing the Other of the sex industry, the employees (re)construct their class identity. This is made attainable thanks to their daily work in the organizations. Through creating the organizations' policies, designing their implementation, and monitoring the progress of their application, the NGOs' employees construct an image of the discriminated Them in contrast with an image of the non-discriminated Us. Indeed, to some extent the characteristics which they employ in this exercise overlap with those which are employed to label the poor and discriminated in the streets as well. However, the reason why class distinction comes to the fore herein is the perception of the Indians in the organizations by the foreigners and vice versa. The Indians in the organizations are not discriminated nor discriminating, because they are one of Us. Similarly, the foreign interns might not possess enough knowledge about India, but ultimately they are equal partners in conversation – none of the controversial opinions about 'Indian' dirtiness, noisiness, backwardness etc. is met with a counterargument from the Indian employees. Their cultural capitals facilitate mutual understanding.

However, it should be noted once again that cultural capital, consisting of particular competences and identities, was a *sine qua non* for performing a professional job in the organizations.[26] Comparing these two groups in terms of economic assets would be rather fruitless, mostly because of their diversity and consequent difficulties in adjusting adequate measurement indicators, including purchasing capacity in India and Western countries (Deshpande 2003; Sridharan 2011). Even if the foreign interns were perceived by the Indians as those of a better economic standing, as they were able to

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[26] As it was shown in the previous chapter.

afford 'travelling all over the world', as Dina put it, this – again – cannot be indicative of economic status. Firstly, because not *all* the interns could in fact afford travelling, as their stay in India was possible thanks to their (quickly deliquescent) savings. Secondly, because the Indians most often were able to support themselves with the financial assets of their extended families, which the foreigners could not. Thirdly, this extended family system required the Indians to not only receive, but also share economic benefits. What is more, the ability to travel is not necessary a sign of economic well-being *per se* as it is rather a reflection of investment choices. Nevertheless, both groups were able to meet similar standards of living in India.

Chapter 5

WHOSE EMPOWERMENT?

'We also resolve:
To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women
as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and
to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.' (United
Nations Millennium Declaration 2000: 5)

'The recent focus on empowerment is an important part of
neoliberal transformations taking place around the world, as
states attempt to downsize their welfare bureaucracies and
reinvent themselves as streamlined and efficient institutions.
Along with economic liberalization, austerity programs, pri-
vatization, and participatory governance, empowerment is
now an accepted part of development orthodoxy.' (Sharma
2008: xvi)

Empowerment is one of the most (if not the most) commonly employed terms
in women and development discourses. As a result, there emerge various
understandings of it by scholars and practitioners, as well as within and by
the non-governmental organizations. Some scholars distinguish cultural,
political, economic and social dimensions of empowerment (Shamashad
2007), others refer to political, work-related, and family-related empower-
ment (Moghadam 2007). In the Indian context, Sangeeta Luthra (2003: 241)
states that:

'the empowerment has become more prominent since the 1970s and increasingly
has become associated with organizations that work with urban and rural poor
women development from above.' (Luthra 2003: 241)

Was this concept relevant in the Women's Foundation's and Shakti's programmes as well? I argue that women's empowerment was the focal point of all of these organizations' activities. For instance, while defining its mission the Women's Foundation refers to Mahatma Gandhi[1]:

> Before you do anything, stop and recall the face of the poorest, most helpless destitute person you have seen, and ask yourself: is what I am about to do going to help him?

The Women's Foundation answers this question with a simple statement: 'We empower'.

As it was already discussed in chapter 2, since the economic liberalization in the late 80s, non-governmental organizations' funds were heavily boosted with the flows from national, international and private resources. These processes, among others, influenced the scope of non-governmental programmes and activities. If women's empowerment within 'autonomous groups' has had a rough anti-government and political angle, it blunted as their successors, non-governmental organizations, relied on donors' endorsements. In other words, if previously women's empowerment was understood as a struggle, it evolved towards anti-political development of women (Sen 1999: 344–345; Kilby 2011: 10–11, 15–16, 20, 26; Menon 1999: 20; Batliwala 2010: 111–121). In this chapter, I depict the notion of women's empowerment. Firstly, I analyze the inspirations for and the interpretations of women's empowerment. In this endeavour, I follow the lead of Aradhana Sharma who employs the concept of translocal assemblage (Sharma 2008). I aim to explore the current understandings of women's empowerment as it is being translated from international and national discourses into the daily operation of non-governmental organizations. However, this approach allows for a focus on *what* empowerment is and might be, and leaves the ways of practicing empowerment unexplored. Thus, in the next subsection, I am interested to show the practical dimensions of implementing empowerment in the non-governmental organizations. I provide an ethnographical account of putting empowerment into practice. The Women's Foundation claims its devotion to participatory development, yet it appears that the bureaucratic requirements render the possibility of community involvement impotent. This leads to an obvious contradiction between the declared approach to development and its realization

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[1]   As far as I was able to trace the original, the sentence quoted by the organization is a paraphrase (cf. Gandhi 1958: 65).

in the community. Nevertheless, the organization's employee in charge of women's empowerment implementation seems to be unaware of this potential tension. Further analysis aims at explaining the reasons for this 'social production of indifference' (Herzfeld 1992). I argue that the key to grasp the causes of these contradictions is the middle class status of NGO employees and the reproduction of economic and cultural capitals.

EMPOWERMENT ASSEMBLAGE

It was already after dusk when I was sitting with Neha on the terrace of my house situated in one of Addi's most prestigious colonies. We had just come back from the community. The slum area that we visited was located two hours away from my place.[2] We were tired after travelling in the Addi summer, noise and dust, and after spending a few hours with no air conditioning in the community. Equipped with mosquito repellent, snacks and *chai*[3], we were enjoying a quiet evening. We passed a few comments about the beautiful and peaceful park in front of us. Instead of a vivid discussion, there was an unusual silence. Neha looked like she was focused on something important, and I did not wish to disturb her. As usual, my role there was to take notes of her thoughts about Shakti. Suddenly, she broke the silence. With astonishing excitement, she referred to the conversation we had earlier about Shakti's mission to be written and posted online:

> Neha: *Anna, I know what we have to do. I know what they need, what we should give them… I think about all these things that we are doing there, and this is just empowerment. You know, we talked about it. Empowerment.*
> Anna: *Empowerment?*
> Neha: *Yes… What is empowerment?*
> Anna: *I don't know, let me Google it…*

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2   One-way. Neha could have afforded to buy a car and hire a driver, but she had chosen not to. Thus, in order to arrive at the community area, we had to disembark the metro and change for another means of transport. One of the options was an autorickshaw, but Neha preferred to avoid it. The reason, as she stated, were the ridiculous demands of autorickshaw drivers. As the community area was located far away from the metro station and it was very unlikely that they would find a customer to be driven back, they requested a charge equivalent for both ways (from 100 to 200 Rs.). Neha, however, wished to pay for one way only. Therefore, she usually asked Rahul, our liaison, to arrange transportation for us: two motorbikes or a car. Only once was he not able to organize anything, and thus we had to take a bus on our way back.

3   Milky sugar tea with spices.

I typed 'empowerment' into a search bar and showed her the results from a random dictionary of synonyms[4]:

'|- emancipation
|- deliverance
|- delivery
|- freedom
|- freeing
|- liberation
|- liberty
|- release
|- rescue.'

She glanced at the screen and said: 'Exactly'. But what does empowerment exactly mean?

Aradhana Sharma provides an excellent overview of this notion in the context of women's government-organized non-governmental organizations (Sharma 2008: 1–29). She argues that the idea of empowerment is entwined with intricate meanings originating from and reworked within neoliberal, feminist development, Gandhi and Paolo Freire-inspired discourses.[5] In order to give her reader an elaborated perspective, she describes

'a layered picture of a translocal assemblage, contending varied meanings and spatiotemporal histories that articulate in contradictory and unexpended ways' (Sharma 2008: xxxiii).

In doing so, she underlines that empowerment cannot be perceived as a completed, coherent and concluded entity. Its neoliberal understandings seem to prevail in contemporary international debate, nevertheless, it is being vigorously re-worked in various local contexts, and inscribed with ideas from counterhegemonic discourses. Although some common elements between those different understandings of empowerment might be found[6], there is an important difference as well:

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[4] Unfortunately, I simply copy-pasted these synonyms to my fieldwork notes without marking the source. Therefore, I must apologize for not giving a full reference.
[5] Sangeeta Luthra uses a different classification and points out that empowerment might be traced in Marxist, feminist, and Paolo Freire discourses (Luthra 2003: 254).
[6] See below.

'Where counterhegemonic projects seek to create political agents of just, equitable, and moral change, who are trained in the arts of resistance, mobilization, and self-governance, neoliberalism attempts to fashion self-regulating citizens who know how to function properly in a free-market society. It aims to institute precisely the self-interested, consumptive, profit-motivated, rights-bearing "homo-economicus" model of personhood that counterhegemonic approaches reject.' (Sharma 2008: 26)

These four strains permeate the daily practices of non-governmental organizations and their beneficiaries. Thus, '*translocal* [is] something both situated (but not locked in place) and formed in articulation with processes that transcend and crosscut various spatial and temporal registers' (Sharma 2008: 2, emphasis original), while assemblage indicates a

'domain[s] in which the forms and values of individual and collective existence are problematized or at stake, in the sense that they are subject to technological, political, and ethical reflection and intervention.' (Ong & Collier 2005: 4; see also Sharma 2008: 2)

I believe that Aradhana Sharma's approach allows one to grasp the complexity of the notion of empowerment and therefore to emphasize its discontents and fluidity. As such, empowerment does not appear as a coherent neoliberal hegemonic concept; it rather appears as a heterogenic ensemble which is being re-used and re-interpreted by local actors. Consequently, it is open and subjected to processes of translation: contradicting, negotiating and re-creating of ideas (Tsing 1997). This particular assemblage of empowerment is obviously strongly immersed in and enmeshed with the socio-political context within which the Women's Foundation operates. Gandhian and Freirean inspirations, as well as GAD feminists' and neoliberal understandings of empowerment resonate in women development orthodoxy in India – not only that of the third sector, but also that of the state's (see for example, Sen 1999; Sharma 2008; Andrews 1930). Thus, not surprisingly the Women's Foundation cooperates with a government agency – National Commission for Women, and refers to a legal framework in its activities. For instance, the organization explicitly points to particular articles[7] of the

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[7] Namely, these are: equality and non-discrimination mentioned in the articles 14, 15 & 16, prohibition of child employment (art. 24) and human trafficking and forced labour (art. 23), protection against children's exploitation (art. 39f) and inhuman working conditions (art. 42), provision of

Constitution of India, which are seen as relevant to the Women's Foundation's scope of work. What is more, the organization refers to the United Nations' conventions[8] on its website. In this way, as well as through cooperation with various international organizations[9], the Women's Foundation inscribes itself in the broader international guidelines which consist of particular objectives to be met and which are described as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The latter include promoting gender equality and empowering women, achieving universal primary education, as well as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (United Nations Millennium Declaration 2000; Kabeer 2001: 169). Significantly, the Women's Foundation is not only influenced by international feminist development policy makers, actively and publicly supported by internationally known Western feminists, but it also actively shapes these policies as has a consultative status with the United Nations. On the following pages, I attempt to picture the notion of empowerment in the light of various interpretations and inspirations; wherever possible I refer to the documents produced at the Women's Foundation[10] that I was able to trace in the course of my fieldwork.

As the Women's Foundation informs on its website and in annual reports[11], the mission to end sex trafficking and prostitution is based on two Gandhian principles: *Ahimsa* and *Antodaya*. The first one refers to Gandhi's widely known idea of non-violence, 'the positive doing of good quite as much as the negative refusal to do harm' (Andrews 1930: 131). As it might be deduced from the discussion in the previous chapter, prostitution is herein seen as violence against women. According to the Women's Foundation, this violence is caused both by 'the self' and 'to the other'. *Antodaya*, on the other hand, denotes the 'rise of the Last'[12] (Narula & Jyoti 1989). Accordingly, to

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free and compulsory education for children (art. 45), state obligation to 'promote the educational and economic interests of the women and weaker sections of the people and that it shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation' (art. 46), as well as 'to secure and protect as effectively as it may a social order in which justice […] shall inform all the institutions of national life' (art. 38). The Women's Foundation refers also to the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1956.

8   Such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), which was ratified in India in 1993.

9   For instance: Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – International, Equality Now, Girls for Gender Equity (GGE), OAK Foundation (source: the Women's Foundation website).

10 As Shakti was an organization *in statu nascendi,* I was not able to collect comparable materials on this issue. Simply, these documents did not exist in Shakti yet. Thus, I mainly focus on the documents produced within the Women's Foundation to illustrate my case.

11 For instance: the Women's Foundation Annual Report 2010–2011.

12 Following the authors, I use uppercase letters. The Women's Foundation does not practise this distinction.

the Women's Foundation the 'most marginalized' – the last person – 'is the prostituted girl or woman'.

> *Antodaya* 'was seen as an effort for the betterment of those who were at the rock bottom. However, the nature of effort was to be similar, that is *voluntarily put in by the members of the community* […].' (Narula & Jyoti 1989: 28–29, emphasis mine)

It was designed as a first step to accomplish *Sarvodaya* – the *panchayat*[13] of all (Narula & Jyoti 1989: 28). It seems vital to stress that claiming *Sarvodaya* by such an institution as a non-governmental organization brings an important message about the latter's self-representation. The reason for this comes from Gandhi's understanding of *Sarvodaya*, which was based on self-rule and bottom-up approach[14] (Sharma 2008: 25) and as such envisioned the role of state as minimal or not existing at all (Narula & Jyoti 1989: 28). Thus, one might see that by referring to the Gandhian principle of *Antodaya*, the Women's Foundation pictures itself as a grassroots organization, while its approach is participatory. Especially so, if one considers that the vision of self-rule conceptualized by Mahatma Gandhi hinged on the assumption that the self-transformation of a person was a key to transforming the society. Central to this was the idea of self-control, which ultimately leads to the truth. The ideal community consists of individuals who follow the path of self-rule (Sharma 2008: 12–13). In such a state-less society, the task of development is entrusted to volunteers, 'principled people who could lead the masses down the path of emancipation' (Sharma 2008: 14; Chatterjee 1989).

Another inspiration for the contemporary understanding of empowerment in the Indian context comes from Paolo Freire who advocated empowering education oriented at the awareness of the oppressed. In other words, empowerment is to him the

> 'help [to] the oppressed to become acutely aware of the various systems of subordination and to emancipate themselves and their oppressors through persistent struggles for humanization.' (Sharma 2008: 8)

This perspective ensues from the assumption that 'the oppressed' remain unaware of the reasons pertaining to their oppression (Sharma 2008: 8).

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[13] Local government system.
[14] See also emphasis in the quotation above.

While in this case prostitutes might be perceived as 'the oppressed' , and their families-in-law and pimps as 'oppressors', the non-governmental organizations' employees are the 'sources of information and support' who facilitate the dialogic process of emancipation (Sharma 2008: 10). Thus, empowerment should be seen as a pedagogical project (Sharma 2008: 10). For instance, the Women's Foundation is engaged in a number of programmes, the ultimate goal of which is claimed as bringing understanding to women in prostitution about the conditions of their oppression and causes for their marginalization. Open mike sessions, workshops in law and domestic violence, as well as legal aid are designed to not only change the situation of prostitutes, but also to bring about their conscientization. However, I do not claim that the educational activities of the Women's Foundation originate only from a Paolo Freire-inspired approach to development. To the contrary, they might also be seen as an attempt to apply empowerment in its neoliberal incarnation.

According to Aradhana Sharma, the notion of women's empowerment permeated with its neoliberal understanding is most notably represented by the World Bank. In this approach, the key to uplifting society is the individual. A person who is conscious of his/her rights and 'entrepreneurial' is seen as a role model for a modern citizen (Sharma 2008: 17). The World Bank's idea rests on 'helping people to help themselves' (Ellerman 2006: 1) or in other words – helping them to self-help (Ellerman 2006: 2). According to this assumption, the model of self-help is difficult to achieve as the role of helpers might be intrusive. Therefore, it is essential to transform development into development *assistance* (Ellerman 2006: 6). Consequently, 'empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives' (Narayana 2005: xviii; see also Sharma 2008: 19). Ideally, the role of state is merely informative, assistive and facilitative (Narayana 2005: xxii–xxiii). As far as the issue of state regulations is at stake, they should be designed to allow and to ensure 'poor people's entry into new markets' (Narayana 2005: xxiii). Consequently, the state-controlled economy should be diminished, while the promoted ideal is that of an informal economy 'which signifies a social space in which objects, services, and money are exchanged according to the rules of the game other than those sanctioned by the state' (Elyachar 2002: 496). The latter is perceived as corrupted and its 'excessive' regulations as curbing people's 'natural' entrepreneurship (Elyachar 2002: 496). In this approach, non-governmental organizations are the legitimate representatives of the members of state-less communities and the embodiment of a civil society (Elyachar 2002: 497). Indeed, the Women's Foundation

developed a complex plan of empowerment which included self-empowerment groups aiming to (among others) save money, use banking and run small businesses. In another document – 'The Manual for Self Empowerment Groups'[15] – the organization relates directly to the definition of empowerment provided by the World Bank.

What is more, an inspiration for empowerment in its participatory attire comes from the area of feminist development, namely its Gender and Development platform (GAD).[16] In this context, GAD proponents argued that empowerment as a strategy of remodelling gender relations should be undertaken *with* women, and not *for* them (Sharma 2008: 7). Importantly,

> '[…] GAD feminists argued that empowerment approaches needed to especially (although not solely) address women's strategic gender interests; they implied challenging women subordination through gender and other systems of domination, which would lead to emancipatory outcomes.' (Sharma 2008: 7)

Herein empowerment is seen as a process, and not an achievable outcome (Mosedale 2005: 244; Smyth 2010: 147; Batiwala 2010: 115; Kabeer & Subrahmanian 1999), and only women themselves can be the agents of change (Smyth 2010: 147).

The Southern feminist network Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) was constituted in 1984 (DAWN 2013) and since then has been lobbying towards circulating its research and analysis into international women development policies. The relevance of GAD feminists for the Women's Foundation approach was explicitly stated in the organization's document, 'The Manual…', including references to Mayoux (1998) and Kabeer (2001).

It should be noted that the above-mentioned elements of empowerment as a translocal assemblage underline the need for participation of the beneficiaries in development projects. Empowerment, it is assumed, should not be simply given to the people, but rather the people should be involved in defining their goals and designing strategies for achieving them. The Women's Foundation once again expresses its sympathy for these postulates. Namely, it claims participatory learning activities (PLA) as a necessary component of community mobilization. According to this guideline, the organization's employees should ensure that the participation of the community would be

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[15] Hereafter: 'The Manual…'.
[16] See also chapter 2.

included in all activities, that the needs of the beneficiaries would be adequately assessed and the organization's programs adjusted to them.

If one looks at the activities of the Women's Foundation through the scope of the assemblage depicted above – through the scope of the ideas being reworked and translated in this particular context – the organization appears as inspired by hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses which stress the need for community engagement in empowering processes. However, the concept of translocal assemblage should rather be perceived as a starting point or a framework for further analysis. Such an image offers mainly the background in which the notion of empowerment might be re-created. Namely, if one looks merely at the content of various notions of empowerment as it is inscribed in the documents produced by the NGO's employees, the focus of the discussion ends at the organization's declarations and its self-representations (cf. Hull 2012). However, I believe one should try to grasp the role of empowerment facilitators and brokers. Are they Gandhian volunteers? Do they – as in Freire's vision – act out of solidarity with the poor? Or perhaps, as per World Bank's guidelines, they are assistants and representatives helping other people to define and improve their capabilities necessary to become free-market competitors? Finally, do they undertake their activities *for* women, or *with* them – as GAD feminists postulated? An unequivocal answer to these questions seems to be more than elusive. Since the image of empowerment assemblage is blurred as various interpretations permeate each other, similarly the role of NGOs' employees cannot be assigned to any particular origin or meaning. Rather, the employees operate with and within different identities which are included for them in the fluid translocal assemblage. They also actively repaint this 'layered picture of empowerment' in order to meet their goals. Thus, in order to fully answer the question about NGOs' workers' role, one should ask not *what* empowerment is, but *how* it is practised. As Michael Herzfeld phrased it in his study on state bureaucracy:

> 'The task is thus to identify the materials out of which state constructs its own origins, and to trace the ways in which powerful interests – or pettier actors – have coopted those materials in order to build their own authority.' (Herzfeld 1992: 50)

I believe that a similar question might be posed in the context of non-governmental organizations, especially in light of their progressing bureaucratization.

In other words, how do development agents engage themselves in the project of empowering the poor?

BUREAUCRATIC EMPOWERMENT

As it should already be clear from the previous section, women's empowerment plays a pivotal role in the Women's Foundation's policies. Empowerment is claimed as the organization's goal to be achieved and it is explicitly referred to in the organization's documents and conversations between the employees. The model of development accepted by the Women's Foundation rests on self-empowerment groups. In October 2010, shortly after joining the Women's Foundation, I discussed my role in the organization with my supervisor, the Head of Programmes. Aisha was eager to offer me an assignment which would suit my research plans. From my previous experiences in other women's organizations in Addi and from studying the Women's Foundation's website prior to this conversation, I had deduced that researching on women's empowerment could be an interesting input for the organization. I shared my idea with Aisha.

> Anna: *I could go to the community and see how they define empowerment. Obviously, this is a general research question, and it has to be rephrased and elaborated, but you know what I mean… We could see what empowerment means to the women in the community…*

Aisha seemed excited at my suggestion. We got engaged in a detailed discussion about the focus of the research to be conducted.

> Aisha: *I think we should first see what marginalization and vulnerability are. If we define these two, we can move forward to empowerment…*
> Anna: *So I should look for the factors of prostitution first?*

Aisha agreed. Hence, I started research on these issues: marginalization, vulnerability and empowerment. The process of conducting this study lengthened. Nevertheless, at the same time I attempted to diligently fulfil Aisha's expectations and thus I spent a significant amount of time on meticulous literature review and designing research tools. When, after a few months, I went out for a cigarette break with Aisha, she revealed to me that she had been working on an empowerment model without informing me about it.

In point of fact, this model was opened for discussion with other staff at the end of October.[17]

The document circulated by Aisha was named 'The Manual for Self-Empowerment Groups'[18] and consisted of 27 pages including two annexure, colourful tables, boxes and diagrams. It described in detail the Women's Foundation's approach to empowerment, as well as the ways of putting it into practice: the *implementation*. Clearly, the document was not only professionally edited, but also formalized, comprehensive and meticulous. It served as a basis for the organization's activities and defined its very core of functioning. It stated that in order to empower the Women's Foundation's 'stakeholders', they must be encouraged to form so-called self-empowerment groups[19], that is small and informal groups of *poor* people who gather *on their own free will* in order to fight for women's rights, gain knowledge about legal rights, educate themselves, resolve conflicts together, as well as learn to save money, create an emergency fund in case of future needs and a network to pursue economic activities.

Significantly, 'The Manual…' was annexed with a tool for achieving empowerment and monitoring its progress – the 'Asset Card'[20], further supplemented[21] with detailed instructions for its implementation. As a matter of policy, each beneficiary of the Women's Foundation had to be registered with the organization and her personal details had to be entered into the organization's database. The next step featured services to be received as per organization's empowerment model. Following, the beneficiary was supposed to reach pre-defined goals, in the organization's language called milestones. To specify, these milestones – or empowerment indicators – were marked as assets, and each of them was accompanied with an additional list of concrete achievements to be accomplished. For instance, in order to become legally empowered ('legal empowerment' asset), the beneficiary was to complete three steps ('achievements'): attend six legal trainings, testify against traffickers, and support actions and cases against clients, pimps and traffickers. Other

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[17] This is an estimated date. As I later found out, the model had an input from yet another non-governmental organization, although I was not able to identify the span of this influence. Nevertheless, it also circulated between the head-office employees, open for comments and discussion, and marked as 'for internal use only'.

[18] The third version of the document, as this one was made available to me.

[19] According to the document, the shift from self-help to self-empowerment groups was caused by too narrow a focus on economic issues by SHGs.

[20] Available both in Hindi and in English.

[21] In another document, concerned with implementation.

assets included, but were not limited to: safe space, possessing nine friends in order to achieve the so-called collective empowerment, public speaking skills to present one's problems to the wider audience, both courage and ability to express one's concerns to the proper authorities, saving, taking loans, a capacity to make a living in dignity (which consisted of interesting elements, i.e. having access to capital, creating a small business plan, and a membership in a business cooperative, as well as a livelihood training). The beneficiary was also to obtain access to government welfare schemes. Additionally, the achievements were supposed to be appropriately dated by the employee and signed by the beneficiary. An empty box for a photograph and space for the name, age, sex and address of a particular card holder was also provided. What is more, the cards clearly indicated that they were issued by the Women's Foundation, as they mentioned its address, logo and self-identifying statement: 'A grassroots movement to end sex-trafficking'.

As one can see, the procedure of accomplishing empowerment was elaborate and formalized. Importantly, it was also monitored by the workers. First, an outreach worker, who – after checking the beneficiary's progress – notified the program officer. The latter verified the statement, entered the information about the achievement into the database and assisted the beneficiary in signing the card. This procedure had to be repeated for each asset. Upon completion, the card was signed by the State Coordinator. Not surprisingly, the whole process was controlled by Aisha, the Head of Programmes, who was a direct supervisor of state coordinators. Thus, not only was she responsible for designing the scope of empowerment and its implementation, but also for monitoring the state coordinators who reported to her. The whole process was further explained in another document, concerned with implementation of Asset Card.

It stated that a beneficiary who was registered with the Women's Foundation had her details entered into the organization's database. After that, she would start achieving milestones described above. Information from an outreach worker was received by the program officer, as I mentioned earlier, the achievement was verified and the database updated. The program officer was the one who inserted the date of an achievement into a proper box in the asset card, while the beneficiary signed it. When all milestones were achieved, the state coordinator put her signature at the bottom of the card.

The model presented above restricts the role of self-empowerment groups' members to 'receivers' of services delivered by the organization's employees

(both head-office and field workers). Women from the community are supposed to follow the path of empowerment as projected in the head office (cf. Green 2000: 73; Goulet 1989: 166; Curtis 1996: 116; Rahnema 1992: 122; Hussein 1995: 173). What is more, head-office employees are also in charge of monitoring, recognition and approval of the women's progress on their way to empowerment. In a formalized scope of this procedure, the only (except for achieving the milestones) input required from beneficiaries of the Women's Foundation's programmes is their signature, which must be given in the presence of the organization's employee. The important question which arises from the mode of empowerment implementation as practised by the Women's Foundation concerns the participatory aspects of this approach. As I argued in the previous section, the participatory dimension of the Women's Foundation's activities in the community seems to be crucial in the organization's self-image. As I understood from the discussions with Aisha, my research about marginalization, vulnerability and empowerment was perceived as a part of the community's involvement in defining its own goals and needs regarding empowerment. Herein, I do not advocate that if the research had been completed, it would have improved the organization's performance in the community by including the beneficiaries' voice. The usefulness of my research seems both relatively irrelevant to further discussion, and impossible to assess.[22] For consistency of my argumentation, it is important to note that Aisha expressed her interest in a research-based approach. What is more, since I was visibly disappointed with the research phase and my input in the organization's activities having been omitted, she further explained that by hiding the information from me she merely avoided an unnecessary influence on the research findings.[23] Nevertheless, despite her declared enthusiasm for this project, she participated in the designing and she was supposed to monitor the model of empowerment in which the participatory element was highly debatable.

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[22] I believe that even if I had used anthropological research for assessing the community needs, the results would be yet another production of knowledge enmeshed in power relations, rather than the act of community speaking (Spivak 1988). A research report, my fieldnotes, etc. would be added to the organization's documents (as it happened with my research in Shakti), and thus would serve as a bureaucratic tool to legitimize the Women's Foundation's activities. On the similarities between documents produced in organizations and within the ethnographical fieldwork see: Britan & Cohen 1980: 23; Riles 2006: 79; Hull 2012: 252–253).

[23] Due to other difficulties which I encountered on the way to conduct this study, my task was never accomplished.

Aisha simply fulfilled her work assignment as requested by her supervisors (the CEO and the President). She was obligated to deliver the model of empowerment on time and she could not wait for any research findings.[24] Regardless of Aisha's personal preferences, the donors' demand for accountability measures had to be fulfilled. She assured me that she was still looking forward to my research results. At the same time, she did not voice any concerns arising from the particular work situation in which she found herself. In organizational practice, the contradictions between the model of empowerment represented and its implementation are being omitted. On the one hand, the representatives of the organization declare – both in their verbal statements and issued documents – the need for a participatory approach. On the other hand, they are faced with the actualities of everyday work assignments aimed at the smooth performance of the organization's and the donors' contentment. As it was noted: 'the most basic goal of any bureaucrat or bureaucracy is not rational efficiency, but individual and organizational survival' (Britan 1981: 11, quoted in Herzfeld 1992: 5). The processes of bureaucratization of non-governmental organizations (Narayana 1992; Fisher 1997), such as the system of rules, hierarchy and division of labour related to it (Narayana 1992: 125), considerably influence the ultimate shape of empowerment. It should not be an overstatement to claim that the end product appears as a bare contradiction of the previous declarations.

Crucially, through its bureaucratization, empowerment becomes a tool for constructing and underlining the differences between the women from the community and the organization's employees. The supervisory role of the Women's Foundation workers, who, according to a hierarchical structure established in their workplace, assume superior positions over their alleged beneficiaries, implies that they are knowledgeable individuals. They are not only sufficiently enlightened to guide the women's empowerment and to control the their progress, but also powerful enough to mentor this process.[25] Contrary to the postulates of GAD feminists, empowerment is clearly *for* and only to a small extent *with* the women, as the scope of the groups' members' involvement is seriously limited. The employees are experts who design empowerment and teachers who approve the passing of its subsequent

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[24] Neither were they possible to conduct in such a short time. There were approximately three weeks between the time she had assigned me the task and the moment when she submitted her draft.

[25] In this, I do not claim that the 'empowering activities' of the employees are simply accepted by the community in the form offered by the organization. To the contrary, they are subject to reinterpretations and contestation. However, this issue goes beyond the scope of this study.

phases, while the members of the community are featured merely as the recipients of standardized and supposedly beneficial procedures. The right to empower their beneficiaries, claimed by the Women's Foundation's employees, is based on and reinforces the stereotypes of passive, ignorant and agency-less women in the community, in contrast with the NGO's workers.

> 'Stereotypes are one of the currencies of social life. They represent long-established prejudices and exclusions, and […] they use the terms of social life to exclude others on cultural grounds. They render intimate, and sometimes menacing, the abstraction of otherness.' (Herzfeld 1992: 72)

Empowerment implementation constitutes yet another practice of bureaucratic classification (Herzfeld 1992: 66; Handelman 1981) and an embodiment of NGO-driven rationality (Herzfeld 1992: 65, 69). As a consequence, empowerment becomes a tool for 'establish[ing] a pervasive reinforcement of [the organization's] culturally constructed logic in […] daily life' (Herzfeld 1992: 65).[26] Contrary to their promises, non-governmental organizations appear to rework and reinforce socially constructed differences instead of alleviating them. A social production of differences results in a social production of indifference as the community members are once again denied the 'common humanity, […], identity [and] selfhood' (Herzfeld 1992: 1).

MIDDLE CLASS MISSION

Analysis of the scope of empowerment and the internal peculiarities of its implementation helps to understand that development actualities reproduce the very same practices that they seek to uproot. The questions of *what* and *how* resonate in scholarly literature on development. In one instance, Frederick Cooper acknowledges the usefulness of analysis that focuses on the scope of development (in other words, on what development is). Moreover, he claims that development is already a recognized part of everyday practices in many corners of the globe and it is claimed to be beneficial as often as it is claimed to be malevolent. For this reason, in his opinion the analytical effort should be shifted to the question of *how* development is used in making these claims (Cooper 2005: 131). Such a shift would help to grasp the cases of

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[26] Similarly to the practices of labelling the women in the community as the prostituted Other, which I was interested to describe in the previous chapter.

the importance of development in contemporary public discourses, both for international and national developing agencies and locally targeted communities. In case of the organizations that I worked with, the answers to both of these questions – *what* and *how* – are rather straightforward.

Under the circumstances presented in the previous sections, the presumed and proclaimed role of the NGOs as legitimate in transmitting the poor people's concerns and interests to a wider audience seems to be even more questionable (Fisher 1997). By picturing its beneficiaries as passive recipients of non-governmental organizations' programmes, empowerment *à la* NGOs denies their ability to decide and to choose their interests or merely voice their opinions.

> 'Early interest in participation was often based within the NGO community, but perhaps the most significant shift over the 1990s has been that participatory discourse rapidly became part of the official aims and objectives of governments and international development agencies.' (Williams 2004: 557).

I believe that there are two conclusions at stake from previous subsections. Firstly, participatory development became a valid and necessary element of self-representation of non-governmental organizations and their activities. This is the case of the organizations I cooperated with as well, and considering the international debate about the misuses of the development sector and participation as a remedy to these misuses[27] (Sinha 2007; Ardenne 2004; Sillitoe, Bicker & Pottier 2002; Korten 1987), it comes as hardly surprising. Empowerment materializes as a prompt description of the organization's activities and the community's needs. This might be illustrated with a rather straightforward example. During my fieldwork, I was asked by Neha, the President of Shakti, to accompany her to a meeting with potential donors. We met in a cosy house in one of Addi's prestigious colonies. Two of the women appeared to be Neha's acquaintances. They conversed joyfully, and afterwards Neha asked for their support for her organization. The women wished to know more about the community we worked with, and thus they asked me about my role in Shakti. I replied that I had been conducting research with the main purpose of assessing the community's needs and to adjust the programmes accordingly. Neha corrected me abruptly: 'I can tell you what the

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[27] See for example Lauren G. Leve who argues that the development industry in Nepal has shifted towards both empowerment and participation as necessary landmarks of developing activities (Leve 2001: 108). On these two terms as synonyms in development discourse see Maia Green on Tanzania (Green 2000: 69).

needs of these people are right away. Education, empowerment and development. This is needed to lead them out of prostitution'.

Participatory empowerment serves as a synonym of sustainable development (Fisher 1997: 455). What is important, participation as a must-have of NGOs' programmes is at the same time a way to their legitimization (cf. Williams 2004: 553). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this legitimization is needed not only for receiving funds from donors, but also for justifying NGOs' operations to a public audience (Rahnema 1992: 129–131). Secondly, the bureaucratic practices enforced by the donors and the public audience's call for accountability and effectiveness are aimed at ensuring legitimization as well. Paradoxically, the very same practices significantly curb the participatory dimension of NGO activities through 'shifting agency into the hands of professional intermediaries' (Batiwala 2010: 119; cf. Chambers 1995). The result, as Maia Green noted in the case of the third sector in Tanzania, is that these practices:

> 'construct[s] the target communities of development interventions as passive agents awaiting the emancipatory intervention of development organizations. Despite the claims of the empowerment rhetoric, poor people lacking the capacity to bring about social transformation by themselves can only participate in development through development agency institutional structures for participation.' (Green 2000: 68)

However, this analytical approach leaves the motivations of NGOs' employees, the brokers of development through empowerment, barely visible. I surmise – similarly to the attempts that I undertook in the previous chapters – that shedding some light on the employees and their attitudes to empowerment can help to resolve the puzzle of *why* empowerment is practised in this particular way. Why do development professionals, such as Aisha, declare their dedication to the community's involvement in empowerment, while at the same time they take part in activities which contradict the very essence of their declarations? In this sense, my attempt is situated within the deliberations on the process of empowerment, instead of focusing on its outcomes (Jakimow & Kilby 2006: 2).

The following discussion oscillates around the problem raised by Akhil Gupta. In the context of state politics, he asks whether sincere intentions of submersing poverty are not deterred by bureaucratic procedures. His answer to this question is affirmative, as he claims

'that no matter how noble the intentions of programs, and no matter how sincere the officials in charge of them, the overt goal of helping the poor is subverted by the very procedures of the bureaucracy.' (Gupta 2012: 23)

At the same time, he refuses to blame bureaucrats for what he calls a structural violence against the poor. Instead, he points at the uncaring modality of the state as a reason for development failures (Gupta 2012: 23). Similarly, I am far from tossing a stone at the NGOs' employees and blaming us for the dubious modes of practicing women's empowerment. However, it is not the issue of guilt which is at stake here. As Pierre Bourdieu noted:

'It is not easy to speak of practice other than negatively – especially those aspects of practice that are seemingly most mechanical, most opposed to the logic of thought and discourse. All the automatic reflexes of "thinking in couples" tend to exclude the idea that the pursuit of conscious goals, in whatever area, can presuppose a permanent dialectic between an organizing consciousness and automatic behaviours. The usual obligatory choice between the language of consciousness and the language of the mechanical model would perhaps be less compelling if it did not correspond to a fundamental division in the dominant world-view.' (Bourdieu 1990: 80)

Social actors engage in various social practices, 'including pro-social practices such as giving donation, attending courses on green technologies or organizing charity dinners' (van Aaken, Splitter & Seidl 2013: 355), and social work in non-governmental organizations, and their goal is to acquire and increase their economic and cultural capitals (van Aaken, Splitter & Seidl 2013: 355). However, they act according to a practical rather than strategic logic (van Aaken, Splitter & Seidl 2013: 355; Bourdieu 1990). As such, people's actions and the structures that they live in, constantly re-interpret and re-create each other (Bourdieu 1990).

I believe that even if the analogies to Akhil Gupta's argument about the uncaring modality of non-governmental bureaucracies can be drawn, there is also an important difference. Non-governmental organizations are not subjected to affirmative action policies, and thus there is no regulation which would secure an entry into them for scheduled castes and tribes. As a result, NGOs tend to be middle class enterprises.[28] In this context, it would be a glaring omission to ignore a certain convergence between middle class representations and the particularities of NGOs' women's empowerment-ori-

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[28] As I argued in chapter 3.

ented apparatus. Central to it is their employees' belief that they are educated, well-informed, and thus sufficiently competent to change other people's lives. This particular mindset – perceiving her/himself as a knowledgeable – individual is not uncommon among the middle classes. The middle classes are not only well-versed in contemporary problems and debates, but also able to take a stand, to see injustice, and to contradict unfair relations in societies. In other words, they see and fix the wrongs by doing the rights. They are destined to solve the problems of the poor and to lead them.

> 'With economic liberalization bringing the middle class to centre stage, it is argued that this group can educate the rest of the society about civic and democratic virtues, collectively creating a civil society that will reform the state and politics at large.' (Baviskar & Ray 2011: 4)

In the Nehruvian era, the middle classes were devoted to the politics of austerity and self-restraint – these virtues were perceived as noble, and helpful in government policies to uplift the poor. However, since economic liberalization, personal success (often marked by consumption capability) came to the fore. India's poor are not to be uplifted through government programs, but through voluntary support by the privileged groups (Upadhya 2011: 170; Radhakrishnan 2011: 202).

Carol Upadhya and Smitha Radhakrishnan show very similar processes in the IT industry. Beginning in the 1990s, this sector of the Indian economy has been glorified as a symbol of progress in the new economic system. According to this image, the only requirement for a job in the IT sector was personal merit, and thus the industry offered employment opportunities regardless of class, caste, gender, regional or other identities. Both authors argue that this picture has been highly manipulated and the IT industry provides job positions mainly to members of the 'old' middle classes who are able to engage their economic and cultural capitals in obtaining and securing employment in this sector.[29] (Upadhya 2011: 167–192, Radhakrishnan 2011: 193–219). Importantly, the IT industry became a site for cultural representation of the middle classes and their virtues. Carol Upadhya illustrates these beliefs with an example of the Infosys owner who – despite strong evidence to the contrary – is categorized as a middle class professional.

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[29] Even if social mobility is possible for the lower-middle classes within the industry, it is relatively limited.

'The Murthy [Infosys owner] icon also embodies the collapsing of the nation into the new middle class: his constant refrain is that capitalism and the accumulation of wealth, rather than socialism, are what will eradicate poverty and make India a global power, this being the justification for his entrepreneurial activities as well as his support for liberalization. He does not hesitate to draw parallel between his devotion to Infosys and the sacrifice of the nationalist leaders […]. In a recent interview, responding to a question about balancing work with family, he said: I don't strike a balance. Infosys comes first. If India has to fully redeem on her promise, a few generations of leaders have to put the interests of the country ahead of their personal interest… […] Leaders must be ready to sacrifice their personal lives and the family must be ready to undergo that hardship.' (Upadhya 2011: 182)

Murthy is a personification of middle classes values. The middle classes – by their personal involvement – are destined to change people's lives, to uplift them from poverty. This self-representation resonates in the NGO sector itself. Middle class members who engage in social work devote their time, skills, and effort to eradicate poverty and uproot violence against women, because they embody the virtue of altruism. Importantly, they voluntarily fill the vacuum left by the state. Preeti humbly denies being an expert, but she still emphasizes her devotion and skills when she says:

[…] my need as an individual to contribute to this change is very strong… which is why I work in the developmental sector. […] It might sound a little pretentious or stupid, but I feel that India needs people like me […]. I'm not an expert… Someone who wants to bring change should go and bring change.

Preeti once again highlights the difference between her as a professional development agent and 'the poor' – the people from the community she is determined to help. Elisabeth, the American intern, presents a similar attitude. She is the one who 'has knowledge':

Now that I have knowledge, I think I cannot stop. Unfortunately, I think it is difficult to secure a career in this field, I'm not sure – if it is possible – yes, if it is not possible then I will have to do other jobs while still working in this area, because it is something that absolutely enrages me and I just, I cannot do anything at this point. And after that [stay in Morocco] I realized like it's not, I just don't wanna have, because you are exposed to so much change, out of your comfort zones through that two years, going back to normal office job seemed horrible to me.

However, this altruism is based on and embedded in differentiating prac-
tices.[30] NGOs' employees, both foreign and Indian, create a class distinction
between the knowledgeable Us and the ignorant Them. I believe that from
this perspective one can draw interesting conclusions about the reasons of
the ultimate shape of empowering practices in non-governmental organiza-
tions. Despite the declared wish for participatory development, limiting the
scope of community involvement serves NGO employees as a mechanism for
facilitating class distinction. As I have mentioned, bureaucratic empowerment
presents the beneficiaries as submissive and inert addressees and predicts their
engagement in developmental programmes at an absolutely minimum level.
In contrast, the professional NGOs are depicted as active agents for change
and thus policy makers and controllers. Thus, bureaucratic empowerment is
not only in the interest of the donors. It is not only designed to satisfy public
scrutiny. Bureaucratic requirements employed in NGO environment legitimize
the middle class status of its employees through creating and reinforcing dis-
tinctions. As such, they serve as a tool for reproducing cultural capital. Hence,
'producing social indifference' actually appears as 'producing middle class
social indifference', while 'modality of non-governmental organizations' – as
'modality of their employees'.

My fieldwork indicates that bureaucratic empowerment is in the deep interest
of the middle class faction in the development industry. The increasing bureau-
cratization of non-governmental organizations after economic liberalization
suits middle class goals. It corresponds with the middle class's aspiration to
lead and educate the poor masses. Thus, choosing this field as a career path
is far from casual. In the next chapter, I aim to examine the consequences of
these social constellations. These seem to be particularly important as 'empow-
erment is nothing if it is not about power – and therefore is a fiercely political
issue' (Rowlands 1998: 28, quoted in Sharma 2008: 6).

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[30] See also Susan Brin Hyatt on a similar argument about volunteers in the USA (Hyatt 2001: 206).

Chapter 6

MIDDLE CLASS (POVERTY) POLITICS

'[…] poverty is reproduced both materially and discursively through processes of dispossession and adverse incorporation into capitalist space-economies, through sociospatial categorizations and political boundary making. [It is crucial] to explore how, when and where middle classes act in solidarity with or in opposition to the poor.' (Lawson 2011: 10)

'Empowerment, an ugly transatlantic neologism which suggests that ordinary workers want, enjoy and benefit from being empowered. Of course, with power comes responsibility, and it is not clear that workers who warm to the former are equally happy about the latter. Also, the empowerment of one group usually means the disempowerment of another group.' (Mascull 1996: 50, quoted in James 2005: 17)

THE POWER OF EMPOWERMENT

As should be clear from the previous chapters, I argue that the goal of NGOs' employees engaging in social work is to attain economic and cultural capitals. In this chapter I would like to cast more light on the connection between attaining these capitals and increasing power (Bourdieu 1986; van Aaken, Splitter & Seidl 2013: 355). I briefly mentioned this matter on the pages above. Firstly, the power dimension is inscribed in the representing of the community of beneficiaries as the Other(s) (see chapter 4). Secondly, as one might guess, it is inscribed in bureaucratic practices aimed at improving the life conditions of the beneficiaries (see chapter 5). Certainly, these brief statements

do not explain much about the intersections of power and NGOs' activities. Rather, they point at some blurred connotations. Thus, in this chapter I aim at examining this intersection. I begin my argument by taking a closer look at empowerment and its meanings, this time in the context of power. Following, I focus on NGOs' activities in relation to their political dimension. I describe the empowerment tools which are used in the community of beneficiaries (workshops) and outside of it (advocacy campaigns). I argue that although the organizations I worked for declare that they employ these empowerment tools in order to improve the lives of their beneficiaries, the tools serve rather to maintain the *status quo* or even perpetuate inequalities. Further on, I briefly sketch the ways in which political empowerment is seen as a part of 'anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1990). NGOs' activities, enmeshed in state and international politics, are far from apolitical. I argue that the reason for the ineffectiveness of development is the middle class acting with the state and international agencies to pursue a neoliberal agenda. Not surprisingly, the middle class is a beneficiary of the latter. Thus, ineffective development lies in its interest.

* * *

I would like to stress once again that empowerment, in consistency with its etymology, is about power. To repeat after Jo Rowlands[1], 'empowerment is nothing if it is not about power – and therefore is a fiercely political issue' (Rowlands 1998: 28, quoted in Sharma 2008: 6). This brings us to another pivotal dimension of empowerment critique which was born within feminist development. If empowerment is about power, what is the nature of power within it? As one might guess, both terms (empowerment and its power) are ambiguous. According to Naila Kabeer, empowerment consists of power *over*, power *within*, power *to* and power *with*. While the first one (*power over*) indicates the capacity to make life choices which would not be restricted by other people's choices and behaviour, the second one (*power within*) is related to the people's knowledge about the ways in which power operates and their ability to stand against the hierarchy they are subjected to. *Power to* refers to the necessity of making strategic decisions concerning people's own lives, and finally *power with* highlights the possibility of undertaking collective

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[1]   Quoted already in chapter 5.

actions with groups who claim to have similar goals (Kabeer 2001: 224–229; Sharma 2008: 7).

Kabeer's understanding seems to resonate with the approach represented in contemporary development sector. If there is power in empowerment, it is rather soft in its character. It is the power to represent, to take stand, to give voice and so on (see also James 2005: 13). It rarely touches upon structural constraints, the rights and wrongs of economic policies etc. As Wendy James put it:

> 'Notions of sharing power, of stakeholders, of participation and representation and so on seem to refer increasingly to the self-contained world of projects themselves: the existence of external structures of land-holding and subsistence economy which have perhaps been disrupted, of political and military formations which have shaped and still shape the forms of social life in a region, tend to fade from views in the world of development-speak. Within the latter, "power" seems to have taken on a much less substantial sense […].'[2] (James 2005: 13)

If contemporary NGOs declare that they act to change power relations, they do not mean changing the system as such, but rather working within it. As a result of the NGOs-state cooperation, non-governmental organizations work within the structures set up by the state. In this sense, they accept the current economic and political system. As a consequence, if they work towards the uplift of the poor, in doing so they at least to some extent follow the government's directions. Moreover, class relations, both within and outside of the organizations, tend to be overlooked (Nagar & Raju 2003: 3). Thus, the discourse that NGOs engage themselves in touches solely on the kind of empowerment that lies in the hands of the beneficiaries.

> 'Development practitioners excel in perpetuating the myth that the communities are capable of anything, that all that is required is sufficient mobilization (through institutions) and the latent capacities of the community will be unleashed in the interests of development.' (Cleaver 2001: 45, quoted in Williams 2004: 561)

Omitting structural constraints, the influence of state and international politics on the situation of the poor brings empowerment in its selective – or even biased – form. Any deeper reflection, political discussion on the factors perpetuating inequalities or action against them is therefore seriously limited.

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[2] Spelling original.

In the following sections I argue that development in its contemporary attire, despite its declared goal to end poverty, inequality and discrimination, better serves its hidden agenda: increasing the power of the middle class.

EMPOWERMENT TOOLS

It was around nine in the morning in May 2011 when I met with Neha (the President of Shakti) at the Addi South[3] Metro Station. We took our usual route to the area where the community of beneficiaries lived. This day was special, because we planned to conduct workshop-cum-focus group.[4] The idea was to combine these two in order to meet our goals. Neha was determined to bring empowerment to the community. I intended to conduct research (in the form of a focus group) to assess the needs of women beneficiaries; and following, to get the best-suited empowerment programmes designed. As I stated in the project of the workshop:

> 'Goal
> To learn about the meaning of being a woman from the participants of the workshop. To know their opinions, attitudes and perspectives; to get to know what their lives look like. The purpose is to use this knowledge in scientific research and the results will remain confidential'.

Obviously, we discussed this event ahead of time. After the discussion, I prepared a written plan of the workshop to be conducted and sent it to Neha, awaiting her comments. She promised to give me her feedback after her next meeting with the women in the community, but I got none. She merely agreed with me.

Although my goal in the workshop proposal was clearly stated as gathering information, this approach was an intervention into community life. I not only positioned myself, again, as a knowledgeable individual who was capable of assessing people's needs, of getting into the core of their existence and 'diagnosing' their problems, but also as a 'goddess' who was able to design appropriate solutions based on my interpretation of the voices that I gathered. In other words, based on my findings, the lives of people in the community were to be evaluated, made understandable for a wider (most probably 'equally

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[3]   Name changed.
[4]   Further on: workshop.

knowledgeable') public, and eventually transformed according to my recommendations. I believe that working for Shakti influenced my research for this organization as well: by being a part of the NGOs' community, I felt obligated to state its 'practical' purpose as well. I felt that my research needed to be meaningful: in the sense that those who were to make use of it in the future would be able to implement my recommendations and effectively change the situation of the community. These feelings, as I see them now, were partially the result of my ambition to climb up the social ladder, of my ambition to elevate myself from a Ph.D. student to a 'competent' researcher. They were also being shaped in part by my conversations with Neha, who declared that the 'practical' goal was the most important. I felt that she expected me to share her hopes and ambitions in this matter. In the moments of my strong attachment to her[5], I was more than eager to support her in her efforts. In the moments of my anger with her, I was ready to support her efforts declaratively in order not to jeopardize my research.[6] As a result, I explicitly stated in my email to Neha which was sent on the 14th of April 2011:

'[…] if our goal is awareness raising, I think we have to answer the questions about the women's rights and their empowerment, their position in the community. Then we can see which gaps in their knowledge and self-esteem we need to cover. What I suggest then is writing down the issues, the things of which empowerment consists.'

As one can see, I stressed that I shared Neha's goals for the community, and simultaneously claimed to carry my own (getting to know an 'objective truth'). In this section, I would like to focus more on her approach. What was it? She aimed at empowering the people in the community, and especially concentrated on women and girls. As a tool to achieve it, we designed and conducted the workshop. Perhaps not surprisingly, our workshop did not go exactly as we planned. When we arrived (together with our volunteer and anthropology student, Geeta[7]) at the community centre, tired from our journey, we were astonished that there were no women. As usual, a few adolescent girls and small children accompanied us, curious about some

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[5] See chapter 1.
[6] As I explained in the first chapter, I was simultaneously conducting research for the organization I worked for (about their beneficiaries) and for my own work.
[7] She was an anthropology student whose task was to help me with the research in the community and interpret from Hindi to English.

new activities happening and visitors arriving. Neha was angry at the realization that due to the lack of participants, the workshop might not take place. She called Rahul (a liaison between us and the community, the community mobilizer) and asked him to convince women from the community to join us. He was busy, but promised to comply with her request. We were waiting, staring at each other and exchanging casual remarks with those gathered around us. With time passing, Neha's anger and our disappointment grew. Thus, she started convincing the girls and children who accompanied us to bring their mothers to the workshop. She spoke with her voice raised, and even screamed at moments: don't their mothers want to fight for better lives?; change their pitiable situation?[8] A few of the listeners went out to find their mothers.

Eventually, eight women showed up.[9] We proceeded with our workshop. Neha opened it up. She thanked all the women for coming and then – to both my outrage and astonishment – talked for approximately 15 minutes. Before the workshop, we agreed that she would say only a few words: explain that we wanted to discuss the meaning of being a woman as it was seen by the participants, and to learn about their perspectives, experiences and opinions. She was also to assure them that our conversation would remain confidential and the results would be used for scientific purposes only.[10] I whispered to Geeta and realized that she was surprised as well. The more Neha spoke, the more surprised we became. If I – in an attempt to influence the participants' opinions to the smallest possible extent – hoped that my supervisor would confine herself to explaining the purpose of the workshop, I was naïve. Instead, Neha was giving a speech about the need for empowerment: women should believe in themselves, she claimed. They should fight for their rights and follow their dreams. They should be able to stand up for themselves and overcome the domination of men and counteract men's abuses. The list continued. Neha's voice was raised as she spoke with passion, like a teacher. The women gathered in the room listened silently.

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[8] Neha spoke Hindi and I refer to her words during the workshop as they were interpreted to me by Geeta, our volunteer.

[9] Although I am not able to determine whether they were eventually convinced by Rahul or their children, or both. The declared reason for a late arrival was a busy schedule.

[10] This was something of an abuse as the workshop was to be used for assessing the community's needs and Shakti's self-representation as an active NGO which not only assesses these needs, but also tries to improve the situation in the community (both by the research and the workshop). Unfortunately, I had not noticed this indirect relation in time, i.e. to make necessary corrections in the workshop proposal.

Following, the workshop went as we planned. Thus, let me outline its scenario. The women from the community of beneficiaries who attended the event were asked to role-play. The proposed scenes represented those women's everyday life, at least according to our own beliefs. After the role-playing, we asked the participants to share their opinions about the situations they enacted and to relate to their personal experiences. However, first they were asked to introduce themselves and to answer our initial question: what does it mean to be a woman?

After a general discussion, we asked the women to play the scenes. The characters were a young married couple who have just had a child, and their (both husband's and wife's) parents.

'Scene 1
Young parents of a baby boy (who was just born) talk about the child and their feelings towards the new (second in their family) offspring. After some time the wife's parents join them and discuss the same issues. Next, the husband's parents enter the scene and discuss their attitudes.

Scene 2
Young parents of a baby girl (who was just born) talk about the child and their feelings towards the new (second in their family) offspring. After some time the wife's parents join them and discuss the same issues. Next, the husband's parents enter the scene and discuss their attitudes.'

Following the role-playing, women were asked to answer the following questions:
1. How did they feel playing their roles?
2. Did they experience similar situations in their lives?
3. According to them, is it better to have a boy child or a girl child? Why?
4. What do they think about the characters, their behaviours and attitudes?

The women who gathered at our workshop eagerly participated in the role-playing, laughed and discussed the subjects that we proposed. As the opinions that they shared are not a matter of this study, let me just cut my argument to the interpretation of our actual goals (i.e. these goals which were hidden behind the declared ones, stated above) in this workshop. Firstly, I think that it is interesting to take a closer look at the design of the workshop. The difference between the two scenes that we asked the women to play was the sex of a new-born. In the first case it was a boy, in the second

case – a girl. In this way, behind the whole idea of the workshop was an under-
lying assumption that one of the parties is being discriminated against. It
seems obvious that this party, as we believed, was women folk – after all, the
goal of our organization was to end their (presumed) discrimination. By this
workshop, we aimed to bring the participants' attention to our belief that they
were discriminated against. We did not ask any additional questions about
their relations with men in the community or outside it, nor did we think
about discrimination as a concept which is an invention of Western democ-
racies. Instead, we hinged on the 'common knowledge' about the situation of
women in India, while historical, cultural and social contexts of the particu-
lar group we cooperated with was out of our sight. It is commonly believed
that in India the discrimination of women already starts in the womb.[11]
Anticipating the hardships (such as the possibility of being raped or sexually
harassed) of a girl's future life, and the burdens of their own family raising
a girl, parents are more likely to terminate the pregnancy, the belief contin-
ues. (Thus, there is the problem of sex-selective abortions.) Following, the
girl most usually leaves her parents to move to her in-laws' house. She is not
obligated to take care of her parents when they are old, and she rarely does
so. At her in-laws' home she is never the mistress of her time. She is respon-
sible for fulfilling their wishes, doing the household chores and so on. The
cases of in-laws' abuses seem endless (including, in its most extreme form,
wife burning). Additionally, her own parents are burdened with the respon-
sibility of providing her with a dowry. This is the general context by which
we were inspired; although, it must be stated that not all of these beliefs are
shared in regard to the community which appears on these pages. That is, it
is believed that a bride price system – not a dowry system[12]– is being prac-
ticed there. Again, the issue at stake here, as I think, is not whether all these
beliefs are true. It is certain that some abuses were documented in the whole of
India. What I rather pay attention to herein is that employing the dichotomy
of a girl/boy child in our workshop – more or less consciously – was based
in and perpetuated these assumptions. One might say that we nevertheless
tried to get to know the situation of the women better. However, there are
arguments which stand against it. As far as I know, the discussion from this
workshop was never used in designing Shakti's policies; these were rather

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[11] See also chapter 1.
[12] Dowry is a practice that customarily requires the bride's family to supplement the groom's
family with a sum of money or an equivalent form of wealth. A bride price is reversed:
the groom's family supplements the bride's family.

planned before and along the research process.[13] Consequently, the women's opinions tended not to be taken into consideration in the attempts to change their own lives. Moreover, even if they were selectively taken into consideration, Neha and I[14] were – again – the ones to decide about the ultimate scope of the following interventions in the community. In this, we worked from the position of power.

Secondly, I believe that the conducting of the workshop should be analyzed more closely as well. Neha's approach seems to be especially telling here. She, as I mentioned, acted like a teacher to – in her eyes – poor, disempowered women from the community of beneficiaries. She lectured them about their rights and her expectations towards the participants before she even had a chance to listen to them. These remarks are not aimed at criticizing her approach. Contrarily to myself, she was at least being honest stating her opinion and attitude. She was clear about the nature of her involvement. True, she did not disclose this in discussing the plans and scope of the workshop with me, but my approach (the approach of a white, relatively privileged woman 'giving people their voice') was similarly ignorant. Moreover, I think our very presence at the community centre with the intent (and its completion) of conducting the workshop put us into the position of those who have the right to lecture other people and, in return, expect them to overcome any barrier that *we* see in their lives. The women gathered in the room with us listened to us and we expected them to follow *our* scenario of the event. They answered questions that *we* formulated and asked based on *our* own presumptions: the presumptions that the women in the community must be discriminated against.[15]

Although the workshop that we conducted might seem to many readers especially outrageous and inconsiderate of the participants, their emotions and various life experiences, it remains a fact that activities of this kind are common in the development sector. The extent to which they are conducted 'rightfully' depends very much, obviously, on the trainers' approach, attitude and the participants' response. However, the common goal is clear: to intervene and to transform the lives of the beneficiaries.

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[13] One more time, I would like to point out that I do not claim that my research in the community would produce an objective result or adequately portray the life of the community.

[14] Although Neha was a decision maker at Shakti, in this context I put a special emphasis on my own engagement as a person responsible and in charge of the research outcomes.

[15] Even if I did not believe in discrimination, and I was aware of the Western roots of this concept – I acted as if I believed contrarily.

As one may easily guess, workshops were also conducted by the Women's Foundation. The workshop of this organization which I wish to present herein certainly appears better planned and professional. Nevertheless, I argue that its underlying meaning remains the same. In this case, the trainers – Sophia and Olivia – were internationally recognized experts, representatives of a US-based NGO whose main area of activity was conducting workshops and trainings around the world: in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Australia. The workshop's scenario came from a book which might be considered a practical guide to women's empowerment, mainly through elevating their self-esteem and leadership skills.[16] The idea is that these goals can be achieved through raising women's self-confidence and their risk-taking ability. The event took 4 days at the end of December 2011, and was conducted with both the fieldworkers of the Women's Foundation and the women from the community. In order to change the situation in the community, the women and the staff were engaged in role-playing, open-mike sessions (based on sharing stories of courage), breathing exercises and so on. Interestingly, the workshop was primarily targeted at the fieldworkers of the Women's Foundation; in its description the staff were pictured as more knowledgeable about the situation of women from the community than the women themselves. The beneficiaries were merely described as 'some survivors who can be groomed'. As I mentioned earlier, these kinds of workshops are always an intervention into the community life. On the one hand, the goal of the workshop was to teach the staff how to interact with women from the community in order to work with them in the most effective way. On the other hand, women from the community were to be taught about how to speak up for themselves, how to be brave, how to gain self-confidence, how to be courageous and bold. In this way, as we can see, they were automatically pictured as not self-confident, not courageous, not bold, and eventually, fearful; in other words, those who cannot stand up for themselves. Moreover, the staff were to be taught that in order to work effectively with the Women's Foundation's beneficiaries, they needed to empathize with them. Obviously, empathy seems to be much needed in working in such a sensitive environment as prostitution; however, it must also be noted that in this context empathy was to some extent instrumental. It was aimed at getting the best results from conducting the Women's Foundation's programmes in the community of beneficiaries and at gaining their trust.

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[16] Again, I cannot provide a reference to this book, nor the names of the trainers, in order to protect the privacy of my respondents.

The programmes – as I explained in the previous chapters – hinged on the assumption that prostitution is an exploitation of women and a social evil. Problematically, the prostitutes (and the so-called women at risk) did not always agree with this picture. The workshop trainers – American ladies, one middle-aged and one older – as well as the organizers (the main office of the Women's Foundation) seemed to agree in perpetuating this picture. The final report from the workshop even included a statement that prostitutes usually suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).[17] Truly a bold statement, considering the fact that the mental state of the prostitutes and the women and girls at risk was not professionally assessed.

Herein, we can see again how class cuts across national boundaries. Although, it is worth mentioning that some of the Indian employees from the head office were mildly disturbed by the remuneration that the American trainers received for their efforts. One day, coming back from the community area to our office, I have noticed that Dina, an Indian employee who assisted the trainers every day, was upset. When I asked her what her concern was, she confessed that although she found Sophia and Olivia very nice people, she nevertheless felt frustrated about their salaries. She claimed that for a 10-day training they were paid 10.000 USD. She found it unfair, as her own monthly salary oscillated around 35.000 INR (875 USD).[18] I was not able to confirm what remuneration Sophia and Olivia actually received.[19] On the one hand, I believe it would be pointless to compare these sums in their absolute value. On the other hand, the purchasing power of my Indian co-worker's and Sophia and Olivia's salaries is impossible to assess accurately. Common sense says that they were able to purchase in India more than Dina; consequently, the latter could not afford the same living standards in the USA as Dina and Olivia enjoyed. Nevertheless, Dina and her family were able to secure a decent living in India. Importantly, these deliberations are pointless in the light of two factors. Firstly, there were a lot of Indian employees in the head office that were better paid than Dina. Thus, one cannot make a case about the American trainers being economically superior based on Dina's salary itself. Secondly, I argued that in the (international) NGO environment cultural capitals possess a high explanatory value. In this sense, Dina, Sophia, Olivia and the other employees in managerial positions at the Addi

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[17] All information about the workshop I gathered from its final report (Women's Foundation 2011) and through participant observation.

[18] At that time one USD equated to approximately 40 INR.

[19] I did not find the appropriate documents.

head office – as well as the Western interns – possessed sufficient compe-
tences and identities[20] to both self-identify and be identified as middle class.

Coming back to the main argument: workshops, along with other inter-
ventions into community life[21], are aimed directly at transforming the bene-
ficiaries' lives. However, there is one more important instrument, which – as
I believe – might be considered an empowerment tool: advocacy campaigns.
Contrarily to the workshops, which are aimed directly at the beneficiaries,
advocacy campaigns are aimed at the wider audience, outside of the commu-
nity. The main goal of advocates for women's rights and women's empower-
ment is bringing awareness about a particular problem into public discourse.
Shakti's campaigns were rather *in statu nascendi*; however, the Women's
Foundation, as an internationally recognized organization, engaged itself
into much more vivid activity. For example, it launched an India-wide[22] cam-
paign about the role of men customers in the procedure of prostitution (the
Swedish model). The main message that was to be sent was that sex work
as a phenomena would not exist if there was no demand for it; that men
who purchase this kind of services are responsible for enslaving women and
ruining their lives. In order to spread this message, the Women's Founda-
tion tried to organize a movement in colleges. As far as Preeti, who was in
charge of this initiative, informed me – initially there was not much success:
These people [in colleges] *are not serious! They can't put anything together!*
Eventually (after I left India) the campaign gained more visibility.[23] Celebri-
ties (both locally and internationally[24] recognized) were hired to promote it.
There was a lot of effort put into social media advertising (e.g. on Youtube,
Facebook and Twitter). Gadgets, such as wristbands, bags and T-shirts, were
produced. A Facebook fanpage featured quite a few pictures of people holding

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[20] See chapter 3.

[21] Such as self-help (or self-empowerment) groups, computer and language classes, needs assessments
      (research), educational theatre performances and so on.

[22] Or even global, considering that it was advertised through social media and the language used was
      English.

[23] Much of it was due to a mistake, i.e. confusing this campaign with a different one, much more suc-
      cessful.

[24] After I left India, one of my friends (at that time still working for the Women's Foundation) told me
      that one of these celebrities was invited to visit the community. The celebrity, a famous actor, was
      very happy with the attention that was paid to him by the children and adolescents who came to
      greet him. He was sure that he was famous even in Indian slums. According to my friend, it never
      occurred to him that this kind of attention was paid to every visitor to the community – especially
      a new one, and especially a white one. Likewise, it never occurred to him that Bollywood movies are
      more popular in this part of the world, nor that TV sets are not commonly available there (accord-
      ing to my friend).

cardboards with a campaign slogan written on them. Interestingly, prostitution was described as rape committed on women by brutal, thoughtless and inconsiderate men.

A newsletter published monthly by the Women's Foundation might serve as another example of advocacy. The newsletter features stories of women and girls in prostitution, women and girls at risk, as well as stories of the activists (e.g. those who visited the community). It also gives actualities of prostitution as understood by the organization. Preeti, as a Communication and Networking Officer, was in charge of this project as well. The stories were gathered from all operational areas of the Women's Foundation, but – not surprisingly – the final touch was given in the Addi head office.[25] This was a rather stressful experience, as Preeti explained to me. Pryianka, the President, felt obliged to edit the stories very carefully and to add or remove a few words, according to her wishes and interpretations. This led to Preeti's constant frustration which might be illustrated with one of our chats:

'7:33 AM **me**:	Are you ok, or overwhelmed by mass emails?
[**Preeti**]:	mass emails alrite
	so much info
	just trying to put it all tog and prioritize what i need to do first
me:	ya a lot happened very quickly
[**Preeti**]:	ha ha
	and [the President's] beh has been a huge motuvation dampner
	[behavior has been a huge motivation dampener]
7:34 AM **me**:	as usual..ignore her
[**Preeti**]:	ya
	just not excited about waking up and coming to office anymore
	:-(
	i am doin my job as a job now… not much passion left :-(
7:35 AM **me**:	once things calm down and we get the bloody [newsletter] out of
	the way it'll be fine, you can re-ignite your passion
7:36 AM [**Preeti**]:	i doubt it

[25] I also found information that the newsletter was edited and published in one of the brothels of Mumbai red light area. However, I cannot confirm it. Moreover, the same source claims that the newsletter was distributed among prostitutes. Contrarily, the letter written by the President (in order to explain the need for the newsletter), mentions the Women's Foundation website as the only mode of distribution. I have never witnessed the distributing of this newsletter to the beneficiaries. The reason might be that I was just not 'in the right place at the right time' or that the information I herein refer to comes from 2007.

[the President] will find a way to make sure it goes away

but its cool

will do what i have to do'.[26]

When asked about the goal of the campaign mentioned above, Preeti half jokingly, half bitterly stated:

'**[Preeti]**:   just rem [remember] everything eventually points to publivizing [the President]

11:30 AM **me**: to publicise the [the President] show?

haha joint typing

[Preeti]:   ya man

11:31 AM   ultimately you u wanna keep [the President] happy u have to do that

11:32 AM **me**: ok'.[27]

Obviously, our conversation was spiced up by our attitudes towards the President. Were all advocacy activities conducted in order to 'keep her happy' and maintain a good publicity for her? Was her only goal to be(come) famous? It is for certain that she was the face of the organization, as well as that the prestige related to it consisted in her cultural capital. In this, she was elevating her social status. However, I argue that the goals of the anti-demand campaign and newsletter were much more diversified. Firstly, both of these activities were interventions into community life. People's stories and images were gathered, edited, adjusted, published, and distributed in order to make the Women's Foundation's case more convincing to the wider public. In turn, this served as a valid argument for (potential) donors. In this sense, these activities might be considered as a direct empowerment tool – yet another way to influence people's narratives and self-representations. Other than that, I believe that advocacy campaigns serve as an indirect empowerment tool. The purpose is, as I mentioned, to publicize the case that the Women's Foundation fights for, to gain support for it – and eventually to change the wider public's mentality, perception, attitudes; in other words – to collectively fight for the empowerment of women from the community of beneficiaries. Again, it is based on the picture painted by the Women's Foundation.

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[26] Spelling original.

[27] Spelling original.

THE ANTI–POLITICS BY MIDDLE CLASS

As I have shown in the previous section, Shakti and the Women's Foundation engage themselves in activities (workshops, advocacy campaigns) that are aimed at transforming both the field they operate in and the public opinion. They vigorously act towards changing peoples' lives and minds. In this sense, their actions are political. However, at the same time they picture themselves as neutral (apolitical) actors, partisans of the development sector who are simply 'doing good' (Fisher 1997). Importantly, according to these organizations, the reasons for poverty and prostitution in the community lie not in the socio-political system, but in the beneficiaries themselves. As we have already seen, the latter – in order to improve their economic and social position – should be bolder, more courageous and able to take risks. In this way, the external factors for their situation, e.g. state and international politics, are passed over in silence and – consequently – very often omitted. Although, as in the case of the Women's Foundation, some campaigns are aimed at changing state policies (in which case the organization positions itself in opposition to the state), *the actions of the organizations* are nevertheless presented as apolitical. As James Ferguson and Larry Lohmann noted in the context of development aid in Lesotho:

> 'The people tend to appear as an undifferentiated mass, a collection of "individual farmers" and "decision makers," a concept which reduces political and structural causes of poverty to the level of individual "values," "attitudes" and "motivation." In this perspective, structural change is simply a matter of "educating" people, or even just convincing them to change their minds. When a project is sent out to "develop the farmers" and finds that "the farmers" are not much interested in farming, and, in fact, do not even consider themselves to be "farmers," it is thus easy for it to arrive at the conclusion that "the people" are mistaken, that they really are farmers and that they need only to be convinced that this is so for it to be so.' (Ferguson & Lohmann 1994: 178)

Similar processes might be observed in the context of Shakti and the Women's Foundation. When Neha, the President of Shakti, discovered that women from the community were not interested in our workshop, she decided that there had to be 'something wrong' with them: they did not want to change their pitiful situation. Moreover, *they* were not able to notice that the latter can be easily changed – if only they have had enough motivation to attend our workshop. Not attending the workshop, the women were simply 'mistaken'.

If only they believed in themselves and have found some time in their busy schedules. Sophia and Olivia, the American trainers, used role-playing, drama techniques and breathing exercises in order to extract and enforce the inner power of the women beneficiaries. Ironically speaking, if only women learnt to breathe deeply, they would not have to be prostitutes, would they? Accordingly, if they only took computer classes offered by the Women's Foundation, their lives would be dramatically improved: they would be able to find 'decent' jobs outside of the area they lived in. Similar was Neha's belief when she planned to launch such classes. Those women who enjoyed, at least to some extent, being prostitutes or those who simply did not see better options for generating income, were – according to this logic – not conscious of the opportunities which lay in front of them. Being a part of a self-help group or learning about the value of one's self in the workshop run by one of the organizations is, herein, understood as a ticket to a better life. Having learnt how to stand up for themselves, the women would unchain their true self. In this view, the structural constraints, disadvantages and advantages of the beneficiaries' life situation are ignored.

Since James Ferguson published his study 'The Anti-politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho' in 1990, both the concept and the metaphor of the 'anti-politics machine' gained a lot of scholars' attention (Chhotray 2011: 2). The influence of Ferguson's work on development studies is indisputable, especially that 'many […] authors may not engage directly with Ferguson's anti-politics machine metaphor but the broad thrusts of their arguments endorse his depoliticization thesis' (Chhotray 2011: 2). The political character of development in the Indian context was excellently described by Sangeeta Kamat (2002, see also Chhotray 2011: 2 for a similar opinion). She showed the ways in which grassroots organizations are enmeshed in state politics:

'The state's recourse to the law, which prescribes the limits and the meaning and practice of development, becomes an efficacious way of suppressing the potentialities of […] numerous civil society initiatives. The illegality of a certain (read: political) way of "framing" development has proved to be fairly effective in constructing a) the state (law, judiciary, planning) as separate from civil society (economy, social), and b) development (mainly economic) as the advancement of the general public interest. This means that we are not supposed to interpret development or fashion programmes in ways other than what the state deems to be in the general public interest (the state being the supreme interpreter of the law).' (Kamat 2002: 72)

Thus, the apolitical character of development is proved to be a myth. An important question remains: whose interests does it serve? I argue that it serves the interests of those who are 'hidden behind it'. As James Ferguson and Larry Lohmann noted, an apolitical representation of development supplies 'the state and its class basis [and covers] the uses of official positions and state power by the bureaucratic elite and other individuals, cliques and factions' (Ferguson & Lohmann 1994: 178). The scope of NGOs' activities, as presented on these pages, confirms these statements. Agents of development, the professionals who work in NGOs (including myself), and in this way claim to represent 'the people's voice' (regardless of how the activities they provide are perceived and counteracted by the community of beneficiaries) maintain and increase their economic and cultural capitals. If development, as it is so commonly believed, very often proves to be ineffective, the middle class has no interest in undoing its wrongs. Contrarily, ineffective development does not improve the class status of the beneficiaries and as such, either perpetuates the *status quo* or deepens the inequalities to the gain of the middle class. Similar processes are described by Sangeeta Kamat in regards to Brahmin petit-bourgeois. She claims that:

> '[…] the definitive expansion of community-oriented development which has taken place in the Third World has provided a particular and new niche for this class in India. The international support for community development in the Third World has brought forth new openings for the members of this class, in terms of managers and organizers of community development projects resulting in, not insignificantly, secure and relatively well-paid employment. It is this specific class that can make good of the funding and other support for community development since they have the skills, background and values to establish themselves as leaders of the poor classes, as well as an urban education that enables them to negotiate the national and international development bureaucracy.' (Kamat 2002: 144)

Contrarily to what is so commonly believed, decentralization does not result in a lower level of state control. It rather strengthens this control by transferring it to spatially dispersed bodies (e.g. non-governmental institutions) which are made accountable and responsible for carrying development projects, but are driven by market and 'enterprise' logics (Sharma & Gupta 2006: 21; Burchell 1996; Barry 1996). International and national agencies cooperate in implementing neoliberal policies and one of their biggest beneficiaries is the middle class. As a result of economic liberalization, the position of middle class members grows stronger. In this sense, both state and international

institutions encourage and enforce processes of maintaining and increasing middle class domination. Non-governmental organizations, run by members of the middle class, actually cooperate with these institutions in creating a new 'modern' citizen according to the dominant neoliberal agenda. This correlation seems more obvious when we look at some important characteristics of contemporary 'advanced capitalism' (Rose 1996). Interestingly, it consists of main pillars on which non-governmental organizations build their accountability. These are:

'a) a new relation between expertise and politics where expert knowledge is "responsiblized" (or simply, made responsible) in relation to claims that are overtly independent from its own criteria of truth and competence […];

b) a new pluralization of "social" technologies, where the center detaches itself from the unified network it sought to assemble (epitomized by the welfare system) and instead links itself more heterogeneously to a variety of autonomous entities – enterprises, communities and individuals;

c) a new specification of the subject of government, where active individuals are increasingly urged to "enterprise" themselves and maximize their life through acts of choice.' (Rose 1996, quoted in Ganesh n/d: 9)

Importantly, globalization in its neoliberal attire makes transnational links feasible. Firstly, the Women's Foundation[28] was funded not only by state agencies, but also by international NGOs (most often US-based). Thus, a flow of funds from overseas, even if controlled by the government, was nevertheless possible. Secondly – and obviously –thanks to the world-wide recognition it gained, the Women's Foundation received many volunteers from 'Western' countries who devoted their skills in order to carry the organization's mission and vision, not to mention internationally recognized feminists supporting its case. Moreover, both organizations I studied were (co)creating and (re)producing international discourses on prostitution, women's rights and development. As such, they are participants of transnational civil society as it is defined by Thomas Richard Davies. It is considered to be a: 'non-governmental non-profit collective action that *transcends national boundaries* but does not necessarily have global reach' (Davies 2008: 3). What is important, these 'action'[s are organized] around shared interests, purposes and values' (*London School…,* quoted in Davies 2008: 3). On these pages, I attempted to

[28] Shakti did not have a necessary government permit to receive foreign funds. However, its President planned to get this permit and she was already searching for appropriate sponsors from overseas.

follow John Harris's advice to take class relations into consideration while studying civil society (Harriss 2006: 446). In this context, NGO workers, both permanent and interns, consist of transnational activists who group together in order to obtain the same goal. Again, the profitless and non-governmental character of their activities is debatable. Not only are middle class members enmeshed in and reproduce state politics, but also – being a part of the development sector – 'produc[e] and disseminat[e] ideologies' (Deshpande 2003: 141). The latter is made possible through cultural and economic capitals they possess, but it also reproduces these capitals. One of the results, as I mentioned above, is ineffective – in alleviating the socio-economic status of NGOs' beneficiaries – NGOs-driven development. Instead of being a politics for the poor, NGOs' politics is rather 'middle class poverty politics' (Lawson 2011) and as such perpetuates social and economic inequalities.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

As I stated in the introduction, this study is about the practices of maintaining, upgrading and reinforcing middle class status – both mine and the people's whom I met during my fieldwork in India – through acquiring economic and cultural capitals. However, it was at a late stage of my work that I arrived at the conclusion to build my arguments around social class. Initially, I planned to research on widows in India. I was fascinated with the media articles and scholarly studies which pictured them (and other Indian women) as discriminated against; discriminated against to an extent that I could not possibly have imagined. Widows in India, according to the picture that was drawn, had no rights or self-esteem; they were deprived of any means of living, and forced to beg. The situation of other women was not much better. These images were very persuasive, and I derived a sense of pride from *not* believing in them. Instead, I believed in those women's agency, and I also believed that my research could bring this agency into public discourse in Poland (and maybe even beyond). In other words, the presumed lack of Indian women's self-esteem fed my own self-esteem. My bold plans were disrupted by the reality that I encountered after the arrival in India. An 'access' to 'poor widows' was not available to me.

Thus, I hinged on another idea: researching on Indian, Brahmin middle/upper class women who worked in non-governmental organizations for other women's rights. I sensed a possible clash of their self-representation as empowered women in opposition to the women whom they considered their beneficiaries. The latter, according to this reasoning, were considered disempowered. Other than that, I sensed a possible clash between the representations of women workers of NGOs as 'modern' and, again, those whom they claimed to represent – their 'backward' women beneficiaries. Another clash that I anticipated was the one between 'Western' and 'Eastern' (Indian)

feminists and their various understandings of the above-mentioned issues. I planned to determine how these self-representations are being created and negotiated in everyday lives of women whom I met in Addi. Thus, my main research questions oscillated around different understandings of empowerment, women's rights, modernity vs. backwardness, as well as development. This time, however, my (less, but still – bold) plans were disrupted by my respondents' lack of eagerness to cooperate, and my lack of cultural and social skills. Although I cannot be certain how the two were intertwined, the result was that I was not able to secure an access to the non-governmental organizations on which I planned to do my research.

Having come back to Poland, I worked on my research project to be realized on my next visit to India. Mostly, I focused on the concepts of development and its important ingredient – empowerment. I encountered a few main strands in the scholars' debate on this issue. One stance claimed that development was a Western invention, a continuation of Western imperialistic domination over the so-called 'Third World' (see e.g. Escobar 1995). Another stance presented a different notion, which considered the fact that even if development started in the 'Western' world, it is nevertheless being incorporated, in various forms, by those who live in the 'Third World'. As a result, one should not see development in its evolutionary, linear attire, but rather look at its different forms: alternative developments (see e.g. Pietrese 1998). Herein, the summary of these accounts is obviously very sketchy and simplified; nevertheless – these were the main arguments that I gathered in the course of preparation for my fieldwork. Eventually, I opted for a solution that was presented by Frederick Cooper, and to some extent by James Ferguson, who rephrased the question about the nature of development, the main point herein being that one should not research on the nature of modernity and development as an ideal concept, but instead ask about the ways in which they are practiced.

Following, I focused on modernity, development and empowerment practices and asked how they are 'used in the making of claims' (Cooper 2005: 131). In doing so, I attempted to escape from the discussion about these concepts being more 'Eastern' or 'Western', to search for differences and similarities between them. Instead, I planned to focus on the understandings of these issues in the field; to focus on the practices of translations. I came back to the field site in April 2011, having already decided both on the research questions and on the fact that they shall be answered within women's non-governmental organizations. The latter proved to be very diversified: according to various estimates, the number of third sector organizations in India is

between two to 3.3 million. Interestingly, this number has increased along with the processes of economic liberalization. As I realized after my arrival in India, another actor on the Indian public scene that has increased its visibility and number along with economic liberalization processes was the Indian middle class. Still, in April 2011 it did not occur to me that these two issues might be interrelated.

The realization of this fact and its possible consequences was rather an evolution which took place during my fieldwork in the organizations that this study is about (Shakti and the Women's Foundation), and shortly after completing my fieldwork at the beginning of 2012. There were two factors that captured my imagination. Firstly, my co-workers were (self-)identified as middle class, and it was their only common characteristic. Thus, all my presumptions about caste, gender, ethnicity and/or nationality being decisive factors in securing job positions at a managerial level in the NGO sector, proved to be wrong. Secondly, reflecting about my own involvement in development activities of Shakti and the Women's Foundation, as well as on my motivations for conducting the fieldwork and being an anthropologist, I realized that my main goal was to increase my own economic and cultural capitals. These 'revelations' were simultaneously inspired and accompanied by other scholars who – after years of omitting class from academic (and consequently public) discourse – at least partially re-focused on class analysis. Particular attention has been paid to the celebrity of all classes: the middle class. However, I believe that the latter's involvement in development projects, including non-governmental organizations, is not adequately explained; especially considering that the proliferation of NGOs overlaps with the decline of class analysis. Class was not the main axis of analysis, either in NGOs or development studies. Thus, my study's goal has been to highlight and add a class component to the existing studies, and to provide an ethnographic account of these issues.

Therefore, in the second chapter, 'Middle classes organizing around the women's question. From social reformers to non-governmental organizations', I synthesized accounts on historical involvement of the middle class in modernization (in colonial times) and development (post-independence) projects. I tried to answer the question whether and in which ways the presence of middle class members in contemporary non-governmental organizations was rooted historically. Moreover, in chapter 2 I analyzed the shifts in the understanding of development and empowerment caused by the implementation of structural adjustment policies (and the role of the middle classes in these processes). As I stated, my analysis was necessarily simplified and selective.

Other than historical developments not being the main focus of this book, I faced certain obstacles. Firstly, even today the variety of Indian third sector organizations is astonishing. Consequently, it was even more difficult (or as I argued, impossible) to establish one definition for all the forms of middle class organizing in such a long time span. Secondly, there was a scarcity of studies focusing on Addi alone, thus my considerations were based on other parts of India as well.

Nevertheless, even a sketchy review led to certain findings. For example, there were two groups who were concerned with women's rights in colonial times: the British colonizers and the indigenous elite. For the first group, the 'discrimination' against Indian women was a result of 'barbaric' Indian traditions. Thus, Indian men were blamed for any abuses. For the second group, the Indian social reformers, any abuses against Indian women were a consequence of 'polluting' Indian traditions by foreign invaders. Nevertheless, the issues of women's status in Indian society were a matter of vivid discussion and became a vital point in pro-independence movements. Interestingly, both Indian social reformers and, later on, the leaders of pro-women associations derived from the new Indian middle class. The latter appeared as a consequence of colonial politics aimed at creating a new class that would support the British administrators (being inferior to them) in ruling the lower classes (being superior to them).

One of the most important results of this politics was the fact that English education became a distinctive characteristic of the Indian middle class. Its vitality is observed in contemporary times as well. Another important (or even more important) result was the emergence of the new middle class in itself. Its members occupied governmental jobs, as well as became leaders of the social movements, including the women's movement. What is more, they launched and led the first associations which dealt with the so-called women's question. Their leadership of the women's movement continued to the post-independence period which was seen as one of the reasons of its decline (immediately after 1947). Middle class leaders had their postulates fulfilled with a new Indian constitution and laws. Thus, it is claimed that they had no interest in the revival of the women's movement. Consequently, the issues that concerned lower class women were to a great extent ignored.

The situation only changed in the 1970s. An economic crisis, caused by both international and domestic factors (including the failure of development policies) led to a common dissatisfaction among the society. Government politics came under close scrutiny which did not omit the women's issues. Many parties realized that the situation of women in India did not

sufficiently improve since the independence. Moreover, there was a revival of women's studies and movements around the world, which might be exemplified with the fact that the decade between 1975 and 1985 was called the United Nations Decade for Women. As a result of these discussions, a new approach in women's development (WID) emerged. It claimed that women had been denied agency as they were perceived as passive agents, and that this perception should be changed. The proliferation of women's organizations followed. However, it is also recognized that although many issues were undertaken, nevertheless a certain imbalance remained. While the concerns that touched all sections of society (such as rape) and the concerns of the middle/upper castes and classes (such as *sati*) were widely criticized, the concerns of the lower classes (such as low wages) were mainly passed over in silence. The question of prostitution, for example, received more attention within *dalit* than the women's movement.

Nevertheless, following the unrest of the 1970s, women's organizations mushroomed. Initially their structure was non-hierarchical and they acted in opposition to the state, thus they were called 'autonomous'. Importantly, these groups were often filled with middle class members who saw in them not only an opportunity to 'help the poor', but also to secure a job position. Further proliferation of third sector organizations was possible thanks to the policies of economic liberalization, in which the government claims to roll back from its welfare responsibilities and delegates them to other bodies (even if these bodies work under government regulations and accordingly with its policies). Importantly, economic liberalization increases the dependency of women's organizations on external, both public and private donors, which in turn causes their professionalization. It seems that the most important – in the context of this study – result of these changes was the shift in the meaning of empowerment, which is a part of development orthodoxy. Within the 'autonomous' groups, empowerment was seen as a struggle against the system. This might not be surprising considering the anti-government angle of these organizations. Contrarily, the privatization of public interest, followed by hierarchization and professionalization of women's organizations, resulted in empowerment *within* the system. Dependency on funding, from both public and private sources (while the flow of the latter is to a great extent controlled by the government), limits the options for critique.

Another significant consequence of the pro-liberalization shift was the change in the Indian middle classes' perception of development. In Nehruvian times, development served a nation-building ideology, while the qualities of austerity and self-reliance were distinctive for the middle classes as

leaders of development. Importantly, development was a dominant ideology and was to benefit the whole society (Deshpande 1997; 2003). Following the economic liberalization, the virtues of the middle classes have concentrated on consumption. Even if this approach is considered to eventually benefit the whole society, development has nevertheless lost its importance (Deshpande 1997; 2003). I further argue that it was not completely abandoned; however, it changed its attire. It remains an important site of middle class formation. The last phenomenon that I touched upon in chapter 2 was the presence of foreign middle class members in Indian-based NGOs. I reasoned that globalization opened up new ways for their participation in development projects in India. Moreover, global media coverage perpetuated the image of Indian women as discriminated against. These horrifying stories make India an 'attractive' destination for those who wish to fight for women's rights.

Importantly, the presence of Western interns in the organizations I worked for raised some concerns. It was so because feminism is a particularly sensitive concept in India – it is often seen as a Western invention and a part of Western imperialistic politics. Although during my fieldwork, I was particularly sensitive towards any signs of a clash between Western and Indian feminists, I do not think that I have ever found any. I concluded that even if the presence of foreign activists in Indian NGOs is understandable given the historical developments that let India be perceived and described as a 'Third World' country, the final diagnosis of Westerners being *invaders* of Indian NGOs would be premature. This issue was elaborated on in the following chapters. For now, it is important to state that in chapter 2 we could see that since the colonial era members of the middle classes (both foreigners and Indians) have been deeply interested in women's development, as well as in development in general. What is more, the scope of development activities, their significance and the issues undertaken had been heavily influenced by the interests of these classes. They positioned themselves as leaders of development.

Given the middle class engagement in modernization and development projects through history (as described in chapter 2), it does not come as a surprise to the reader that members of this class often occupy a prevalent position in contemporary non-governmental organizations. However, even if middle class membership of NGOs' workers casually appears in some definitions of these organizations, the reasons for this state of affairs have been barely analyzed. Similarly, I did not encounter a study that would fully analyze what are some mechanisms that facilitate the entrance of middle class members into the development sector. Even if these issues were noted by other scholars, they

were not – in my opinion – adequately explained, nor was there ethnographic material sufficient to prove such processes. Thus, in chapter 3, 'Non-governmental organization as a middle class enterprise', I attempted to fill this gap. Answering the questions mentioned above, I argued that middle class belonging is a *sine qua non* to enter the ranks of head office workers of NGOs. Following, I believe that middle class members eagerly take the opportunity to reinforce their social position via development work. Moreover, this is feasible thanks to the economic liberalization.

Making my argument, I started by explaining the definition of non-governmental organization as understood on these pages. In this, I followed Siddartha Sen (1999), who noted that these organizations consist of middle class members; they are considered professionals and get remuneration for their work. Furthermore, I tried to show the ways in which members of the middle class are being favourably selected. Crucial to that is, as I mentioned, economic liberalization. It caused the professionalization of non-governmental organizations: they require professionals who can follow donors' demands for accountability and standardization of procedures. Thus, thanks to the privatization of welfare policies, NGOs fill the gap of responsibilities which were previously considered to be the state's. Moreover, I argued that professionalization must be reflected not only in a competent staff, but also in a clear reporting structure. These were easily noticeable not only in the case of a more established organization (the Women's Foundation), but also in the case of an emerging one. The presidents of these organizations were the main decision makers. They were the faces of their organizations. The structure of the Women's Foundation was often and vigorously discussed as if it were one of the most important issues that this organization worked for. This observation was confirmed by the fact that the Women's Foundation spent a significant amount of money (to the international consulting agency, HR) on presenting itself as accountable to the donors.

Obviously, the professionalization of NGOs is a hint at these organizations' middle class membership. However, it does not answer the question about the mechanisms that these organizations employ in order to achieve such an effect. In this, I looked at the points of entry into the organizations. Relying on the case of the Women's Foundation, I presented procedures employed in order to choose candidates best-suited for particular positions. I arrived at the conclusion that the recruiting of both interns and permanent employees focused on similar skills: linguistic (where the most important was the knowledge of English, secondly – vernacular languages), educational (higher education acquired from the most prestigious universities was preferred),

along with appropriate attitudes, codes of behaviour and so on. Importantly, these skills were impossible to acquire without an adequate economic capital, as well as previously gathered cultural capital. The former was particularly important in the case of foreign interns who received no remuneration for their work in Addi, and thus had to possess appropriate private funds to spend time in India.

Although there were differences between NGOs' employees (such as different castes, religions, gender and nationalities), they all shared certain cultural and economic capitals. Thus, I concluded that the most important factor in securing a job position in an NGO environment was middle class status. Hence, my initial guess – based on employees' self-identification as middle class – was confirmed. Therefore, I turned to the definition of middle class as understood by Satish Deshpande (2003). On the one hand, he proposed to consider such characteristics as caste, community, etc. as identities and include them into the notion of cultural capital. On the other hand, he postulated that competences (such as language skills) are another element of this capital. This approach led to position class as a dominant characteristic, and at the same time – to pass over other characteristics. I think that this move was justified in the case of my research, given that middle class status appeared to be decisive to become a professional, head-office worker of an NGO. In focusing on class, I omitted intersectional analysis. The other reason I believed this omission was justified is that it was only possible thanks to deriving from an actor-oriented approach (Long & Long 1992; Long 2001). In my case, I focused on development agents who are brokers and translators of development (Lewis & Mosse 2006: 13; Escobar 1995: 110).

Further analysis indicated that my presumptions about the domination of Western employees within the organizations could not be confirmed. Firstly, our role in the organization, due to a relative lack of experience and (secondly) lack of knowledge of vernacular languages, was mainly supportive. This was visible in more flexible office hours, as well as in a limited access to the Women's Foundation's daily operations and decisions. Nevertheless, we were part of the same processes as permanent employees: working in the NGO helped us to reproduce cultural capital. Thus, at the end of the third chapter I argued that interning at Indian organizations is yet another way of practicing middle-classness; in other words, it might be seen as a form of tourism which is a classificatory practice (Munt 1994: 105–107; Featherstone 1987: 56). In this, interning cannot be understood as travelling for pleasure only (Cohen 1979: 179). Most importantly, in an NGO environment the middle classes of Western and Eastern origin work hand in hand in order to

acquire cultural (and economic) capital(s). Moreover, the logic of an NGO is very much market-driven, which is seen in the processes of professionalization. Thus, I argued that an NGO can be seen as a middle class enterprise.

In chapters 4, 5 and 6, I examined the consequences of this particular class composition and its meaning for contemporary development. In chapter 4, 'The Other as a class distinction', I asked about the ways and outcomes of representing the community of beneficiaries by middle class members. Non-governmental organizations are particular working places, i.e. they use particular values in order to set up their cause (mission and vision in NGOs' jargon) and represent it to the wider public. Thus, they are not 'regular' employers: it is assumed that their employees should share their goals. That was indeed the case of the Women's Foundation and Shakti. They both claimed to work against sex trafficking and prostitution, but in doing so they positioned themselves in one site of international debate about these issues. Which site was that? Let me remind that, as I stressed in chapter 4, there are two main stances on prostitution. The first one argues that it is violence against women that should only be uprooted. Therein, women are victims of patriarchal oppression. Another stance claims that prostitution is a regular job, and consequently sex workers should be de-stigmatized. Both organizations that I worked for chose to support the vision of prostitution as a social evil. This was reflected, among other things, in the language used by the Women's Foundation's employees.

Importantly, the line between sex trafficking (which by definition is coercive) and prostitution (which in some circles is considered a free choice) was blurred. Consequently, the employees of the organizations pictured all women beneficiaries as powerless victims with no agency. Even if some of the women in the community claimed that prostitution was their preference and that they enjoyed it, the employees would simply claim these statements were not sincere. Even though a survey conducted among the beneficiaries of the Women's Foundation indicated that the majority of them were rather at risk of becoming prostitutes than actually performing the job, the organization's opinion remained the same. The picture of the community of beneficiaries was rather uniform. If the women were victims, the men were their oppressors. Herein, what seemed the most important, however, was not the actual situation in the community of beneficiaries, but the employees' stubborn refusal to revise their beliefs.

I argued that the representation of the beneficiaries to the public by the employees of these organizations gives them tremendous influence over the community with which they work. In doing so, as we have seen, they do not

represent an actual situation, nor are they really interested in it. Instead, they construct the picture of the 'Community Other'. Following, I examined the reasons for these perceptions, as well as their consequences. At first I turned to an interpretation derived from postcolonial feminist studies in which 'Third World' women are perceived as backward and ignorant in contrast to modern and educated 'First World' women (for more on this dichotomy see e.g. Mohanty 1984). This would seem to be correct. After all, women from the community were pictured as a homogenous mass. The problem arose when I realized that men from the community were pictured in a similar way: after all they were considered to be perpetuators of women victims. Thus, the explanation of this puzzle could not run along gender lines. Therefore, I turned to another interpretation, that of 'Third World' people, both men and women, assessed and represented by 'First World' people. I think that this reasoning might be to some extent true, but only when it is applied to the foreign interns at the Women's Foundation. Indeed, they often commented on the so-called discriminatory practices in Indian society.

However, ultimately there were some doubts about this interpretation as well. Firstly, I noted that the foreign interns, in their critique of widespread discrimination, did not include their Indian friends and/or the Indians working in our organizations. Also, the Indian workers themselves perceived various groups of Indians in different ways, e.g. based on the area or region in which they lived. Secondly, my own status in the Women's Foundation was a puzzle: sometimes I was from the 'West', sometimes from the 'East'; at other times I was neither from the 'East' nor the 'West'. Thus, I did not agree that the picture of the 'Community Other' as drawn by the organizations could be explained as neo-colonial imperialism of the Western world. Indeed, any explanation which derives from a rigid understanding of orientalism would not clarify the reasons for picturing the community of beneficiaries in the way I encountered my fieldwork. On a short note, I must mention that I focused on orientalism because the concept of the Other is based on it (Said 1979).

I surmised that the limitations that were expressed were caused by focusing on geographical location: if the othering was taking place in India, it seemed accurate to deploy the East-West dichotomy. Therefore, in order to describe this mosaic in the best-suited way, I turned to the 'spectre of orientalism' in which orientalism is understood as a 'way of thinking' and a 'set of mind' in creating social distinctions (Buchowski 2006: 466). In this sense, the practices of othering in the Women's Foundation were extended beyond the East-West divide and were based on class divisions, which was confirmed by ethnographic evidence. The picture of the Other was created and perpetuated by

the employees of the Women's Foundation, both foreign and Indian, in order to acquire cultural capital. In these practices, the Others were not those from the East, but those who engaged themselves in 'immoral' sexual behaviour. It must be added that this immorality was judged not on the basis of a particular behaviour itself, but rather on the basis of the class status of a person engaging in it. Thus, I argued that the othering in NGOs should be perceived as creating distinctions. As a consequence of this, the voices of the women in the community who claimed to enjoy their work, and the men who claimed not to take advantage of them, were ignored, because the employees did not believe that a person who is lower class (by definition: uneducated, poor, backward and ignorant) could engage in consensual sex. If so, such persons were considered to be unaware of their rights. Another interpretation by the NGO employees would jeopardize their class position.

In chapter 5, 'Whose empowerment?', I took a closer look at the meanings and usage of a popular concept in development orthodoxy, i.e. empowerment. In doing so, I was inspired by the fact that both Shakti and the Women's Foundation declare that empowerment is the main point of their activities. I was interested to show the ways in which empowerment is being used in NGOs environment; in other words, I focused on the practicing of empowerment. Firstly, though, I depicted empowerment as a translocal assemblage (Sharma 2008) in order to show its internal discontents and fluidity. Following Aradhana Sharma, I attempted to indicate that empowerment in the Women's Foundation is inspired by, and as a consequence constantly reworked within, four different discourses: neoliberal, Gandhian, Paolo Freire's and GAD feminists', and consequently – it is a heterogenic ensemble. Moreover, I provided ethnographic evidence that all these approaches are (to some extent) present in the Women's Foundation's understanding of empowerment. In order to do so, I analyzed the organization's documents, website and activities.

Importantly, all of these approaches stress the need for the beneficiaries' participation in empowerment processes. It is claimed that they should be actively engaged in their own empowerment: define their goals and strategies for achieving it. Such is the claim of the Women's Foundation. Thus, I further looked at the ways of practicing empowerment by the Women's Foundation. Was it indeed participatory? Moreover, what was the role of development brokers (NGOs' employees) in empowerment? In other words, I arrived at the question of how is empowerment practised? This question was particularly important to me, because my main task at the Women's Foundation was to research on the notions of empowerment in the community of beneficiaries, so that the organization could implement the findings and recommendations

from the final report. I was astonished when after a few months of research I found out that even though my research had not been completed, empowerment was nevertheless being implemented in the community.

Moreover, it was implemented in a way that seemed to me very well-thought-out and professional. The organization created a special manual which defined not only the meaning of empowerment, but also described the ways of delivering it to the community. The latter was in a special form of an 'Asset Card'. This tool listed necessary milestones to empowerment as understood by the Women's Foundation. Interestingly, it was required that an employee of the organization confirm the achieving of every milestone. Thus, empowerment was not only designed in, but also monitored by the head office. I argued that such empowerment by the Women's Foundation positions its beneficiaries as passive recipients of its services, where their main involvement is obtaining a signature on the 'Asset Card'. However, it would be premature to arrive at the conclusion that this effect was purposefully employed by the Women's Foundation's workers. To the contrary, the person who was in charge of the program supported my research which – in her opinion – would lead to designing an empowerment model more suited to the community's needs.

Thus, I asked about the reasons for this state of affairs and I surmised that they lie in the hierarchical structure of the organization and the donors' pressure for accountability. These result in the bureaucratization of NGOs (Narayana 1992; Fisher 1997), and therefore have a significant impact on their operations. However good the intentions, ultimately the empowerment is not participatory. Instead, the workers of the organization appear as teachers of their beneficiaries who deliver empowerment in the scope they wish to, and – what is more – supervise its realization. In this way, empowerment does not empower, but creates yet another distinction between middle-class NGO employees and their lower-class beneficiaries. What is more, bureaucratic empowerment is consistent with the middle class mission, which is to lead the rest of society. This was not only shown in chapter 2, but also in the accounts of middle class practices in different sectors of Indian economy, e.g. the IT sector (Upadhya 2011; Radhakrishnan 2011; see also Baviskar & Ray 2011).

Following, I reasoned that picturing empowerment as participatory is an important ingredient of the organization's self-identification, created for the donors' needs. Development has been widely criticized for its misuses and thus the organizations which pursue it must appear as accountable. A solution to that is participatory development which, by definition, includes the beneficiaries' opinions and stimulates them to act on their own behalf. The same donors also require accountability because they wish to know how the

funds they donate are used; moreover, they expect these funds to be spent effectively. Consequently, the process of 'spending money' must be accurately documented. This leads to a certain paradox, as documentation means bureaucratization and 'shifting agency into the hands of professional intermediaries' (Batiwala 2010: 119; see also Chambers 1995). However, once again bureaucratic empowerment serves the middle class interests, as it facilitates class distinction.

In chapter 6 I focused on the political dimension of NGOs' activities. This issue was suggested in chapters 4 and 5 as well, however, it required additional attention. First of all, following other authors (see Rowlands 1998: 28, quoted in Sharma 2008: 6), I stated that empowerment, both in its etymology and practice – is political. Contrarily to that, NGOs picture themselves as apolitical actors on the public scene. If the power in their activities is recognized, it is rather the 'soft' kind of power which focuses on the right to be listened to and heard, ability to stand for her/himself, etc. This means that power is easily available to the beneficiaries – the only thing they need to do in order to acquire it is to learn how to claim and express it. Consequently, structural constraints of one's position, the overcoming of which would require structural political action, need to be ignored and overlooked (see also James 2005). This conclusion came from analyzing the empowerment tools which are employed by the Women's Foundation and Shakti.

I divided them into two groups. The first encompasses direct empowerment tools which mainly aim at transforming the situation in the community of beneficiaries (such as workshops, computer classes, etc.). These are believed to deliver concrete skills (e.g. the skill to raise one's voice) and knowledge (computers, English, legal rights). The second group encompasses indirect empowerment tools. Although they are mostly directed at informing the public audience about the situation of the beneficiaries, they eventually – thanks to the raising of society's awareness – bring betterment to the community itself. These activities include advocacy campaigns, newsletters, etc.

Again, ethnographic examples prove that empowerment tools are political in nature. Not only do they aim at transforming, but are also consistent with the state's politics. Analyzing their modes of realization showed that they put emphasis on the beneficiaries' capabilities and (presumed) incapabilities. In order to better their lives, people from the community should: a) follow the NGOs' advice, b) learn to be courageous and conscious of their rights. In perpetuating this model of empowerment, NGOs directly follow the state's directions to remain supporters of the political, social and economic *status quo.* Moreover, the middle class in the development sector cooperates with

the middle class in the governmental and international bodies. All of this is done in order to create a 'modern' citizen who would follow the logic of the market; who would obey state laws. All of this in order to increase the power of the middle classes.

As I mentioned at the beginning, I attempted to escape from the discussion about the nature of development. Putting the middle class in the centre of my considerations led to a certain paradox. Firstly, let me remind the reader, I wondered how development is used in the making of claims. Secondly, I focused on the middle class in development. By mixing these two, I eventually arrived at the final question: how does middle class involvement influence the scope and the effects of development? (In other words: how is development used in the making of claims by the middle class?) Though, ironically, at the end of my way I arrived at the research questions which allowed me to intertwine both the nature and the ways of practicing development. Consequently, on the pages of my study I have been arguing that the scope and (possible) inefficiencies or misuses of development are caused by its class character. I have come to the conclusion that the ways in which development works lie in a deep interest of the middle class to maintain and gain economic and cultural capitals. As such, development serves as a tool for the members of this class and results in perpetuating social and economic inequalities.

Obviously, my line of reasoning bears some limitations. First of all, I think that my analysis was possible thanks to the particular class composition of the organizations I worked with. It cannot be excluded that in other cases a more detailed examination of other than class or other than middle class identities would be required. One could also focus on the practicing of particular elements of cultural capital. Second of all, I believe that it would be interesting to provide more ethnographic evidence on the argument I made, i.e. to expand the research to other sites. I was not able to conduct fieldwork in the community of beneficiaries; my visits there were rather occasional. Similarly, I focused on the head offices, while it would be interesting to include the branches of the organization in other regions of India as well. This, however, was not possible to achieve.

Nevertheless, I believe that the revival of class analysis leads to interesting conclusions. Most importantly, as my fieldwork indicated, it changes the ways in which one can perceive development and women's empowerment. They appear not necessarily as evils imposed by the Western imperialism, but rather they are being reworked within a translocal institution, e.g. a non-governmental organization. The old division into the West and the East is blurred, and its explanatory value seems questionable. Similarly,

enthusiasm for bottom-down development (which was planned as a remedy to top-down approaches) appears pointless. It should rather be realized that the effectiveness of development activities does not depend on vertical (e.g. top-down vs. bottom-up) and/or institutional distribution of power, but rather on both vertical and horizontal micro-actions of the members of particular social classes, and the struggles between them. Practices of development and women's empowerment are not some faceless discourses. The focus on the actors involved in these discourses shifts attention to particular class interests that influence the scope of NGOs' activities (adding to it the state's and international institutions' regulations for non-governmental organizations). The whole project is inscribed in the logic of contemporary capitalism (especially that development and empowerment do not question the *status quo*, but seek to reinforce it) and non-governmental organizations are yet another tool for the expansion of capital. In a mode of Gramscian passive (however perhaps unintended) revolution (Chatterjee 1993; Kaviraj 1997; Nilsen 2013), development

'Enhance[s] the power of those who were the most important holders of property rights – in the first place, the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie and the rich peasantry – and of the bureaucratic office holders whose discretionary powers were increased with the greatly expanded role of the bureaucracy as a whole.' (Corbridge & Harriss 2000: 65)

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