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# Places of poverty and powerlessness: INGOs working 'at home'

### Abstract

*The search for transformatory development practice, distanced from colonial binaries and representations, has been the focus of decades of scholarship. Recent research suggests that INGOs are central in this regard, whether in their governance, fundraising, advocacy, knowledge-management, engagement with others or their approach to programme design. This paper progresses these debates by providing empirical evidence of the value of domestic programming in this 'project'. Drawing on three case studies, the paper finds evidence of INGOs' search for a programme strategy, which moves minimising the violence of 'othering' from theory to practice.*

*Findings indicate that domestic programmes incorporate dimensions of a development practice, which: make visible a theory of poverty as powerlessness; distances it from the violence of 'othering', and is grounded in an ethic of 'everyone matters'. If development practice and intervention design can incorporate these elements, a transformatory, decolonized development practice may be possible.*

### Keywords

INGOs, power; othering; ethics; transformation; decolonize.

## **Introduction**

The search for sustainable transformatory development practice, which distances itself from colonial binaries and representations has been the focus of decades of scholarship. Recent research on INGOs' governance structures (Fowler, 2012), or the way they fundraise and advocate (Yanacopulos, 2016), manage and disseminate knowledge (Narayanswamy, 2016), engage with others (Moyles, 2012) or negotiate their intervention models (Beck, 2017), suggest that INGOs are an important lens through which to consider this challenge. This paper moves these debates forward by providing empirical evidence of the value of domestic programming in this 'project'. These domestic programmes may offer fresh ways of looking at the programming of development INGOs and reflect new broader understandings of what development is. Drawing on three case studies of Oxfam GB, Islamic Relief and Oxfam America, the paper finds evidence of INGOs' search for a programme strategy, which moves minimising the violence of 'othering' from theory to practice. These domestic programmes point the way forward to an approach to development in which its spaces, actors and practices are challenged and opened to new interpretations.

The paper first sets out the debating terrain around transformatory development, demonstrating how it has become the focus of efforts in policy, practice and theory to distance development from its postcolonial critiques.

While acknowledging the breadth of these debates, this paper situates international development NGOs (INGOs) within these efforts to find a transformatory development practice.

The second section of the paper outlines the methodology used in this empirical study of three INGO domestic poverty programmes established by Oxfam GB, Islamic Relief and Oxfam America. It introduces the approach to power used in the data analysis. Section three sets out the research findings and offers examples of domestic programmes as a specific strategic device for INGOs to signal their 'postcolonial distancing'. It draws conclusions about the potential for INGO domestic programmes to bridge the divide between development (practice and theory) and its postcolonial critiques.

The link between these critiques, the existence and nature of a 'transformatory' development and the related challenges for INGOs are first explored here.

### **Postcolonialism, transformatory development and INGOs**

The postcolonial critique of development revolves around the continuities and discontinuities between the 'colonial encounter' and development studies, its practice and theory (Kothari, 2005, p. 51). These are well-rehearsed arguments, which are summarised here in order to draw out the context in which the search for a transformatory development practice by INGOs is situated. The first of three threads of these continuity debates is around the origins of development theory and practice. Empirical evidence, for example, traces clear linkages between the way colonial indirect rule worked with intermediaries and local

politicians and the emergence of 'participatory management' (Cooke, 2008).

Likewise, Cowen and Shenton (1996) locate the origins of the concept of development in industrialising Europe's notion of 'trusteeship'. These examples reveal continuities previously concealed, a process Kothari refers to as 'obscuring a colonial genealogy' (2005, p. 50).

The representation and treatment of 'the other' in development theory and practice is the second domain of colonial continuity. Recent scholarship reveals the way that online platforms and INGOs represent those living in poverty using two-dimensional and counterproductive caricatures: the passive victim, smiling woman, worthy men (Schwittay, 2015) or innocent children and deserving 'Third world' women (Dogra, 2012). Through these devices people and countries become 'development categories' (Shrestha, 1995) and 'othered' objects of development devoid of socio-political contexts (Mitchell, 1995). Central to the attempt to re-theorise development is the question of the 'distant other' as its object. Considerable attention has been paid to the basis of the obligation to this 'other' in the context of development assistance (Pogge, 2005, Appiah, 2006, Singer, 2009, Miller, 2010).

The third thread of continuity between the colonial encounter and development is the approach to knowledge. *The Development Dictionary* (Sachs, 1992) encapsulates this set of postcolonial critiques. Terms such as 'poverty' and 'development' carry with them deep histories and sets of assumptions that belie their supposed technical neutrality, and privilege some types of knowledge while marginalising others. Development knowledge has often hidden behind this

'neutrality' and become dominated, in practice, by technical interventions that have lost their potential for radical change (Ferguson, 1990, Fernando, 2011). Bourdieu demonstrates the power that unspoken assumptions and embedded practices can wield, both symbolically and through real effects (1977, 1999). Some have taken up these debates at the level of real effects. A recent study concludes, for example, that NGO documentation centres in India fail to respond to the 'contextual embedded nature of existing Southern knowledge systems' (Narayanaswamy, 2016, p. 124).

Few would now dispute the pre-1945 origins of development theory and practice. The focus of the debate has shifted to what these origins mean for development today. Do these roots imbue the very notion and practice of contemporary development inherently oppressive, violent and exclusionary? Or can it be redeemed by 'better' and more appropriate practice?

These questions are the preoccupations of development ethics, which focuses on identifying and refining the 'means' and 'ends' of development, their foundations and relationship with each other. It also queries the nature of development itself, asking whether it is intrinsically violent and exclusionary and, if so, can development practice ever fulfil the promise of its ends. These debates have their roots in understandings of the colonial 'orientalist' project in which 'othering' becomes a form of exclusion and symbolic violence (Said, 1978). This idea, echoed in Bourdieu's work on the real effects of symbolic power, has conceptual significance for understanding the domestic programme of development INGOs with their implied binaries of 'home' and 'overseas'. Goulet prefers the term

'liberation' over 'development', as it captures the goal of 'existence itself: to provide all men with the opportunity to lead full human lives' (1971, p. x). Much of the literature on NGO practice investigates development 'means', asking, for example, whether projects achieve sustainable change (Hira and Parfitt, 2004, Beck, 2017), whether practices of participation are sufficiently inclusive (Rahnema, 1992, McGee, 2002) or whether and how NGOs can ever plan for socially progressive ends (Ferguson, 1990, Escobar, 1992, Choudry and Kapoor, 2013, McCourt and Johnson, 2012).

Demonstrating that 'transformatory' development is possible and can respond to each of these critiques has become the normative goal of many who argue that development practice is not inherently characterised by violent 'othering' (McCourt and Johnson, 2012, Moyles, 2012). These approaches have diverse labels - 'emancipatory' (Parfitt, 2013), 'another' (Hettne, 1990, p. 471), 'alternative' (McCourt and Johnson, 2012) or small "d" development (Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington, 2007). This paper uses the term 'transformatory' to denote a development in which existing power structures in society are challenged and re-built, while acknowledging the term's normative and aspirational tendencies (Kelsall and Mercer, 2003; Moyles, 2007). This search for a development in which its means do not confound its ends is considered futile by some (Bebbington et al., 2008, de Vries, 2008). Others insist that individuals and states can and should act in response to their transnational responsibilities (Miller, 2010), especially if they have benefitted from the human rights-deficit of others bypassed by global institutions (Pogge, 2005).

The argument for individual agency and the use of pragmatic judgement in development practice is used as further evidence that development ends and means are not incompatible. McCourt and Johnson (2012) locate the space for action by individuals in the 'constrained autonomy' of managers. In the light of these debates, there is clearly an immediate attraction for INGOs who wish to distance themselves from nineteenth century understandings of trusteeship - or 'what can 'we' do for 'them'" (Banuri, 1990 cited in Cowen and Shenton, 1996, p. 453). Even within deeply critical studies of 'NGOization', there is evidence that NGOs can be forces both for *and* against radical transformative politics (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013). The remaining question is then, what might this transformatory development practice look like in the hands of INGOs?

There is a rich literature, which probes the legitimacy deficit of INGOs (Pallas et al., 2015, Walton et al., 2016, BOND, 2015). At the heart of much of this debate is the question: can INGOs ever be part of a truly transformational development, which addresses the three threads of postcolonial critique examined above? The dilemma of INGOs is to be situated at the nexus of the tension between the needs for resource and for an informed public. One study concludes that:

*NGO attempts to articulate alternatives is strongly circumscribed by being embedded within a neoliberal aid system and by needing to draw support from constituencies in the North whose lives are defined by highly commodified forms of consumption'. (Yanacopulos and Bailie Smith, 2008, p. 313)*

Prescriptions for INGOs in responding to these critiques include changing the

way they: govern and structure themselves (Fowler, 2012, Elbers and Schulpen, 2014); engage with the public in the global North (Yanacopulos, 2016); manage and disseminate knowledge (Narayanaswamy, 2016), and approach their programme design (Njoroge et al., 2009). In a direct call to INGO staff to reconsider relationships with those with whom they work and are in relations of power, Moyles advocates for 'trying to stay with the otherness of others...so there is greater co-creation of the ends and means of development' (2012, p. 553). These considerations put INGOs at the heart of the debates explored above, drawing together postcolonial critiques of development around colonial continuities in knowledge, power and othering while searching for a practice, which avoids these forms of 'violence'. The rationale for using domestic programmes as a window onto these debates is provided below.

Fundamentally, the postcolonial critique focuses on the practices and theories of development that have stripped it of considerations of power, with INGOs at the centre of this dilemma. This is the starting point for this paper, enabling an analysis that is driven by frameworks of power and acknowledging the history and current reality of development as a political undertaking, rather than stripped of its memory and political content (Lewis, 2013, Olukoshi, 2007). The next section of the paper outlines how this research foregrounds power in its analytical framework.

### **Methodology and approaches to power**

The paper is based on a larger research project, which aimed to understand why and with what implications INGOs establish domestic programmes. Four case



study INGOs were selected. Oxfam GB (OGB) established its UK Poverty Programme (UKPP) in 1995 after internal consultations starting in 1976. This major case study was selected as the author's initial curiosity was fired on first encountering this domestic programme. The rationale for selecting three smaller case studies were based on their identity as INGOs with origins in industrialised countries, the importance of having another UK-based case study for comparative purposes, and insights into different types of INGOs, such as single issue and faith-based. Islamic Relief UK's (IR) domestic programme was inspired by Islamic Relief US who, in 1995, partnered with a local clinic for toy distribution at the festival of *Eid el-Fitr*. Oxfam America's domestic programme was established in 1992 with a US Regional Office in Boston and its own Director to run the programme. Save the Children Fund, Denmark was established in 1945 to provide support for refugee children arriving from post-World War II Germany, Hungary and Poland. This paper focuses on the first three of these INGOs, using data collected in 2010-2011 from 41 semi-structured interviews and over 150 archive documents. Interviewees came from eight sample groups ranging from staff, Trustees and stakeholders involved in initial domestic programming decision making, through to past and present staff, partners and beneficiaries. Data was coded using emergent themes, including power. A three-dimensional approach to power (Gaventa, 1980) together with Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977) is used to explore the factors that drove the decisions and what this reveals about their conceptualisations of development, drawing tentative conclusions about the implications for a transformative development practice. The empirical data provides the evidence-base for this paper.

This research builds on recent work within development studies, which makes use of Bourdieu's theory of practice. (Cammack, 2002; Ebrahim, 2005; Bebbington, 2007; Krause, 2008). The conceptual 'tools' of *habitus*, field and *doxa* offer a robust engagement with issues of power. *Habitus* is best understood as a 'matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions' (Bourdieu and Nice, 1977, p.83) and embodies both structured and structuring power. This paper considers the organisational *habitus* of the case study INGOs, which operate in the 'field' or domain of international development. The structuring capacity of *habitus* in turn creates the '*doxa*' or universe of unchallenged assumptions. This concept provides a tool with which to query the relationship between the domain of international development and domestic programmes.

Gaventa's model of power was developed in his early research in the Appalachian Valley in the United States (1980) and later as the 'Power Cube' approach (Gaventa, 2006). The Power Cube identifies types of power and the spaces and places in which they are exercised. This paper focuses on the three *types* or dimensions of power (1). At the first level, surface mechanisms, such as resources, allow a person or group to assert power over another. Secondly, rules and agendas can shape or control a person or group's ability to participate. Myths and symbols exert power, at the third level, by shaping perceptions and meanings of the limits and possibilities of action. VeneKlasen and Miller re-work the dimensions as visible, hidden and invisible power (2002).

The paper uses this three dimensional approach to power, alongside Bourdieu's theory of practice, forming a conceptual framework to explore issues of power in

INGO domestic programmes.

### **Research findings**

The research findings discussed here, grounded in empirical data, focus on three themes as they relate to the postcolonial critiques aired above. Firstly, we explore an analysis that indicates that domestic programmes incorporate dimensions of a development practice, which make visible a theory of poverty as powerlessness. Secondly, we consider how the domestic programmes distance the INGOs from the violence of 'othering' and from colonial binaries and representations. Finally, we argue that there is empirical evidence that these domestic programmes are grounded in a development ethic in which 'everyone matters'. Each of the three central arguments above is supported by brief examples from the case studies.

#### *Making visible poverty as powerlessness*

Our research findings indicate that the INGOs' theory of poverty was one of the drivers of their decisions to establish domestic programmes. This was a disposition, which structured the organisational *habitus* of OGB, Islamic Relief and Oxfam America. The other constituent elements or dispositions of this *habitus* were: the organisations' development ethic, institutional practices and concerns about their future as INGOs.

All three case study INGOs experienced tensions between their organisational understanding of poverty and that of their domestic public supporters, reflecting findings from other research (Yanacopulos and Bailie Smith, 2008). One

indication of this tension is the different language used by the INGO staff and documentation and the media in referring to people living in poverty (2). The former used phrases such as ‘economically vulnerable’, ‘families with children in care’ and ‘migrant workers’. In stark contrast, the media used language that generally specified their geographical separateness, for example, ‘the ragged, starving, desperate peoples of Africa, Asia and South America’ or ‘the skeletal figures who haunt our television screens when famine strikes overseas’.

The gulf between INGOs’ approach to poverty and that of their supporters is deeply problematic. It suggests that INGO attempts to find alternative approaches to development are constrained, rather than helped, by their own supporters. Figure 1 illustrates how the INGOs’ domestic programmes attempt to address this issue, making visible a theory of poverty, which is fundamentally about powerlessness, rather than lack of income or material goods. It analyses data from interviews and archive documents from all three case studies using different dimensions of power. OA, for example, works to address all three types of powerlessness in its domestic programmes through supporting families with their income, advocating for safer working conditions for tobacco farm workers and highlighting race and income inequalities in the US.

*Figure 1: Understanding domestic programming through a model of three-dimensional power*

<b>Power dimension</b>	<b>Oxfam GB</b>	<b>Islamic Relief</b>	<b>Oxfam America</b>
First: over resources (Visible)	Coping strategies, assets, time, income, debt, flow of outgoings, food prices, cost of fuel, cramped housing.	Classes in a cold portakabin, poor housing, unemployment.	Insufficient earning power to provide for families.

Second: over rules and agendas (Hidden)	Dealing with state agencies, care workers, benefits system, post-code discrimination, government policies (eg. care system), agendas and services, making their voice heard, 'tea & tuck' 15mins at 5.30pm (3), transport services, credit ratings, disability.	Disproportionate experience of deprivation across domains of education and housing. Vulnerability of young Muslim offenders.	Undocumented migrants. Lack of legal protection against unsafe working conditions, inadequate housing, unfair wages.
Third: over myths and symbols (Invisible) power	Public perceptions of poor people, discrimination and marginalisation of some groups, nobody cares, poor self-image, people paid to speak to you, dignity, fear of dealing with government bureaucracy and of society itself.	Islamophobia. Need to demonstrate Muslim communities' good citizenship credentials. Articulation of community dignity, confidence and maturity.	Hurricane Katrina and response to it laid bare sharp disparities 'hiding in plain sight' across US. Images of poverty and racial segregation.

One of the distinctive elements of Islamic Relief UK's theory of poverty and organisational *habitus* is its location at the nexus of three sources of authority and legitimation: Islamic belief and tradition, international development norms and practices, and the UK Muslim communities. Acknowledgement of the disproportionate deprivation levels of Muslim communities in the UK is at the heart of the domestic programme. Muslims are, for example, more likely to suffer

from the double-exclusions resulting from poor housing and Islamophobia (Perry and El-Hassan, 2008). They are disproportionately represented in the most deprived communities (Centre on Migration Policy and Society, 2008). An IR member of staff at the time recalls:

*I remember visiting a mosque in Birmingham where they were teaching Arabic in a portakabin in the cold. IR says surely it can help these communities, which have made IR, when we have raised so much money from them for work elsewhere in the world.*

In 2009 the IR domestic programme worked with: deprived communities; disadvantaged young people; BME communities; BME women; grassroots community organisations, and individuals in economic hardship. These beneficiary groups reflect the need to address poverty as powerlessness in all three dimensions. Grants address areas of visible resource deprivation such as the cold portakabin, thus acknowledging first-dimensional power. But they also address issues of second-dimensional power encountered when working, for example, with young Muslim offenders in prison to ensure they have appropriate support through mentors.

In addition to the need of the Muslim communities for support to overcome income deprivation, the data shows a need to be perceived as good and active citizens of the UK. This can be observed in the interfaith and community cohesion priorities for the Hardship Fund and in some of the 64 grants given in 2010. Other institutional grants assisted community organisations in their own

responses to international disasters, such as the £25,000 for Doctors Worldwide response to floods in Pakistan (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2011). Many provided modest support for community events or community development work. IR's theory of poverty is, therefore, rooted in part in the exclusion, deprivation and vulnerability of Muslim diaspora communities in the UK. Evidence from this programme suggests that the wider significance of the UK Muslim communities wanting to work 'at home' is the dignity of a whole, if diverse, community not just of the individual. This addresses directly third-dimensional power in the need to overcome myths and reshape conceptions of the Muslim communities in the UK.

The Oxfam America's (OA) domestic programme is unequivocal in its explicit use of the word 'poverty', in contrast to the UK-based INGOs. The original rationale for the programme was a belief that the systemic forces that caused global poverty and hunger were the same worldwide. OA's response to Hurricane Katrina and the devastation it brought to the State of Louisiana demonstrates how OA brought its theory of poverty as powerlessness into the public domain. OA's early interventions called for release of appropriate levels of Federal funding to support local initiatives around housing and employment opportunities, targeting low-income communities. However, in its later report, *Forgotten Communities on the Gulf Coast*, it focuses on second and third dimensional powerlessness, reprimanding Federal and State agencies for their slow response, badly targeted disaster assistance policies and rendering communities invisible and left behind (Pipa, 2006). The situation of the fishing communities whose towns were entirely submerged by Hurricane Katrina is

described as follows:

*...their plight received scant attention from the media. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Red Cross followed suit. Both refrained from venturing too far down the peninsula. Displaced locals struggled for weeks to get good information about the status of their hometowns...Today, hardly any state or federal funds have assisted the recovery of independent fishers...now their ability to continue lies imperiled. (Pipa, 2006, p. 8)*

The examples provided from the domestic programmes of Islamic Relief UK and Oxfam America give insights into the significance for INGOs of making visible their theory of poverty as powerlessness and how this is achieved. This involved tackling the issues of where and for whom international development work happens, with the potential for conceptual disruption. The paper now turns to consider findings in relation to distancing INGOs from the violence of 'othering'.

#### *Postcolonial distancing*

Each of the three domestic programmes deployed strategies, which consciously queried and blurred the binary lens through which INGO work is frequently conceptualised. This effects a distancing from practices which wield third dimensional power in shaping how whole communities are perceived, thereby 'othering' them. The argument made here is that this process is more than symbolic, having real effects.



Oxfam GB has used the UKPP to distance itself from criticisms around colonial continuities. Capturing vividly an awareness of these continuities, a member of staff referred ironically to the organisation's history as 'white men in shorts out there doing stuff' (Bronstein, 2010). The need to respond to these criticisms was felt acutely by Oxfam staff and cited as one of the reasons for the UKPP establishment. Two examples illustrate this. Firstly, in a 1995 Council meeting, a Trustee said 'if we don't do this...we're going to be promoting an us and them view of the world'. Secondly, Stan Thekaekara's intervention at the People's Assembly (4) challenged Oxfam's perception of itself and the world, seeing poverty as an issue 'out there'. Stan worked with tribal communities in south India and had been to the UK in 1994, invited by the Directory of Social Change, to look at community work. His experience visiting the Easterhouse Estate in Glasgow and seeing that of impact poverty was the same as that in India, was cited by many interviewees and documents as helping to change the terms of the debate.

The empirical evidence points towards two types of 'othering' from which OGB wished to distance itself in its practice and both of these were mobilised in support of the UKPP. The first considers the poor as either deserving or undeserving, and the second suggests that the process of development is oriented towards distant, other people. In 'othering' the poor as undeserving, there is a refusal to engage in the details of poor people's lives, or to acknowledge the three dimensions of power encountered by the poor. This includes the third-dimensional power of myths, which demonise poor people. The UKPP is seen as mechanism by which this can be addressed, bringing in

understanding of equal access to rights, justice and dignity from its work in the global south.

Third-dimensional power, in which myths and symbols influence the way issues are perceived, is central to OGB and its partners' analysis of the causes of poverty. The lack of control over how 'the poor' are perceived, leading to stigma, indignity and 'othering' is seen to perpetuate poverty. It is also seen as the root of many inequalities by which people are 'othered'. The understanding of who is, or can be, poor, is made explicit by OGB's UK Poverty programme working, for example, with isolated farming families in the Peak District or families with children in care in London. It is, therefore, deeply disruptive of the binary opposition inherent in the notion of the deserving and undeserving poor or a sense of 'them and us'.

The OA domestic programme is situated in two debates. The first is about the most effective, appropriate and ethical way for INGOs to undertake 'development interventions' in the future. The second debate asks what is the ultimate purpose or 'end' of international development: for what and for whom does it work? Is it a development which addresses 'the problem' of a distant other by resource transfers from the global north? This is the narrowest conception of what development can be (Goulet, 1997), or 'development *for* the poor' (Ballard, 2013). It is an exclusionary approach, distinct from emancipatory understandings of development that work towards global justice (Parfitt, 2013). OA's domestic programme functions to re-work the development ethic and re-shape the domain of international development, disputing its *doxa* and positing a

model of international development as *comprehensive social action*. This new model challenges and re-frames the binary of development and humanitarian work. This echoes the starting point of the domestic programme, articulated as a belief that ‘the separation of poverty and hunger into domestic and international components is no longer valid’ (Hammock and Hirschland, 1992, p. 1). The domestic programme, therefore, mobilises symbolic third-dimensional power to re-shape understandings and practices. As a consequence, OA’s organisational *habitus* and the domain in which it works are also re-constituted. This is further evidence of the dynamic generative nature of the *habitus* (Lizardo, 2004).

The empirical evidence from our case study INGOs suggests that while development continues to address issues of power and powerlessness in only the first two dimensions (resources, rules and agendas), its means will inevitably confound its purpose. However, the incorporation of considerations of third-dimensional power into development practice, reduces the violence inherent in development practice, thus allowing for an ethical development practice.

Having discussed how the three INGO domestic programmes mobilise a theory of poverty as powerlessness and distance the INGOs from postcolonial ‘othering’, the paper turns to its final consideration. It argues that a further mechanism by which the domestic programmes represent postcolonial discontinuities is through their assertion of a development ethic in which everyone matters.

*An ethic in which everyone matters*

This paper contends that both empirical and normative arguments demonstrate that a broad inclusive ethic of 'everyone matters' is an asset for INGOs. Both arguments lead to a tentative conclusion as to how INGOs could respond to critiques of their role and the changing landscape of development, mobilising their domestic programmes.

The concept of a development ethic in which 'everyone matters' is used by Appiah (2006) to argue for the universal obligation of kindness to strangers. Its use in the context of this research is the starting point for a development ethic in which 'strangers' can be both overseas and 'at home'. In fact, the sphere of national and international policy and practice now reflects this ethic: for example, the theme of BOND's 2014 conference, *Redefining Development*, and the session entitled 'Is it time to align international and domestic action on poverty and inequality?' Perhaps the most significant reflection of this universal ethic is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with their emphasis on global collaborative action for better outcomes for all.

Each of the case studies provides examples of how the domestic programmes are grounded in this ethic. The themes of dignity and justice were the most prominent in the UKPP data in considering the ultimate purpose of development. The significance of dignity as an 'end' of development and its connection with the concept of the 'undeserving' poor is highlighted by UK partners and OGB staff working in the UK who feel this issue keenly. An approach to poverty which divides the poor into 'deserving' and 'undeserving' has been central to the UK

policy context for centuries, going back to the Poor Law Act of 1601 (Alcock, 2006). OGB's need to distance itself from this approach is central to the UKPP, which is seen as a counter-acting mechanism. This approach to development ethics points to a practice in which "It's much more talking about one humanity, one set of programmes and our interconnections as people' (Gaventa, 2010).

The alignment of UKPP partner work with SDG targets is testament to this universal development ethic. For example, ATD Fourth World's work with families in London experiencing intergenerational poverty aligns with SDG target 1.2 to reduce the proportion of people of all ages living in poverty 'in all its dimensions according to national definitions' (United Nations, 2015, p.17). Christians Against Poverty in Manchester work to ensure the involvement of communities in local decision-making and participatory budgeting (SDG 16.7) while UNISON Scotland fights for the rights and dignity of low paid care workers (SDG 5.4). One of the functions, therefore of the UKPP is its insistence that if justice and dignity are the ethical 'ends' of development, the intervention approaches used are relevant universally, including in the UK.

OA's domestic programme demonstrates how the organisation aligned its practice with its approach to 'one world, one problem' (Hammock and Hirschland, 1992), considering justice and rights to be the ultimate 'ends' of development. Its mechanisms for achieving these ends focus on working with others, through research and campaigns, to exert pressure on duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations to rights-holders. For example, the post-Katrina report *Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises*, says:

*Making sure the billions designated for recovery benefit the region's most vulnerable communities remains a matter of political will. Action can and must be taken immediately. (Pipa, 2006, p.2)*

Reporting on the impact of climate change in Louisiana, OA calls on supporters to contact government officials. In campaigns to improve wages and working conditions for farm workers in Florida, duty-bearers include companies such as Burger King, Compass Group, Walmart and Taco Bell (OA, 2010; OA 2011). This work aligns with an ethic of 'everyone matters' by addressing the interconnectedness of all parts of the world where there is poverty or a lack of dignity and justice and those who have the power to act. However, some within OA want this to go further still:

*We have global development discourses which look at the causes of poverty – but that stops at the borders edge – we don't bring it home. (Sinclair, 2012)*

In the case of IR, the goals of dignity and justice underpin the organisation's development ethic. These goals are expressed in the payment and use of *zakat* (5). They are further articulated in programme approaches, which emphasise livelihoods in order to avoid undignified dependency, for example, provision of mentors for young Muslim offenders (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2010). Thus the IR domestic programme responds to issues of exclusion, deprivation and lack of dignity for Muslims in the UK while at the same time recognizing that scriptural and Prophetic guidance call for universal justice and compassion (Khan et al., 2009). Unlike, the domestic programmes of OGB and OA, it does not rupture or challenge the organisational *habitus*. This is because underpinning

both IR's domestic and international programmes are the three distinct sources of authority: Islamic belief and tradition; international development norms and practices, and the UK Muslim communities. These three sources of legitimation can be seen, for example, in the way that IR presented its Strategic Direction for 2011-2015:

*...we will be moving away from a 'needs based' approach to poverty and development, and towards a 'rights based' approach which recognises that poor and suffering people have rights over us, as defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah.'* (Islamic Relief Worldwide, nd., p.39)

As long as the domestic programme mobilises understandings of poverty and deprivation that reflect international development norms and practices and make sense to IR's largely UK Muslim donating public and their understandings of their *zakat* obligations, it sits comfortably within the organisation's existing *habitus*.

Fundamentally, each of these areas of work assert powerfully that everyone matters, focussing on groups of people who have generally been vilified in the popular media, to maintain their equitable access to rights and dignity. The paper now moves on to make the normative argument that in order for INGO work be grounded in an ethic in which 'everyone matters' and for this to lead to a truly 'transformative' development removed from its postcolonial continuities, a disruption to organisational *habitus* may be necessary.

A development ethic in which everyone matters is not necessarily perceived as an asset by an organisation, such as OGB, that is so closely defined by and

associated with the field of international development. Although the UKPP may be evidence of OGB's capacity to rupture its organisational *habitus*, the organisation may choose not to exercise this capacity. Moreover, the UKPP exposes OGB to 'the same risk' as its southern partners, involving it in the day-to-day tensions, trade-offs and debates of domestic politics. Although, as argued above, this is fundamental to OGB's theory of poverty as powerlessness, it moves development work beyond the popular conception of 'poverty alleviation' and OGB's 'international development' identity. Oxfam America's domestic programme has challenged its organisational *habitus* to such an extent that its domestic work is now framed as 'comprehensive social action' rather than 'international development'. Islamic Relief's domestic programme does not offer the same challenge to its organisational *habitus*. The issue here is not whether INGOs can be engaged in political activity, for example as charities registered in England and Wales. Recent studies have confirmed they can (Miller, 2012). Rather, the domestic programmes mobilise third-dimensional invisible power to reveal the essentially political nature of development to INGO supporters, or their 'sleight of hand'.

Despite evidence that a transformatory development practice is possible, the ability of some INGOs to achieve this will be circumscribed by their capacity to reconstruct their organisational *habitus*, foregrounding power in their theory of poverty and minimising 'othering' practices and other postcolonial continuities. The domestic programmes of the case study INGOs mobilise third-dimensional power to allow subtle shifts in understandings of what this practice could look like, making visible a development ethic in which everyone matters, without the



exclusionary 'violence' of othering. In the case of IR, its organisational identity as an explicitly faith-based INGO rooted in the teachings of Islam, already embraces the 'other' in two domains: firstly, as a faith-based organisation in the largely secular field of international development (Tomalin, 2012), and secondly, as a Muslim organisation in a post-9/11 world (Petersen, 2012). However, the potential of OGB and OA's domestic programmes to model an ethical and emancipatory development practice cannot be realised without rupture to the existing organisational *habitus*. This scenario suggests that an ethical development practice is possible in the context of a newly configured organisational *habitus*, with the potential to disrupt the *doxa* of international development.

## Conclusions

This paper provides empirical evidence of INGOs' search for a programme strategy, which makes an intentional break from postcolonial continuities. Domestic programming is an important facet of this strategy in which key elements are: making visible their theory of poverty as powerlessness, minimising the violence of 'othering', and operationalizing a development ethic in which everyone matters.

The paper notes how power works within the INGOs' theory of poverty and that an understanding of the three dimensions of power facilitates a comprehensive identification of poverty. It is the differentiating factor between the approaches of the INGOs and public perceptions. An appreciation of the invisible workings of

myths and symbols in perpetuating poverty is what distinguishes one approach from the other. According to the underlying logic of the UKPP debates, for example, this must be recognised and addressed if ethical development is not to be distorted by unethical 'means'.

The paper identifies the broader potential implications of the domestic programmes of OGB, OA and IR. It recognises that third-dimensional power is active in these debates, mobilising and challenging the myths and symbols around questions such as: Who is poor? Where does development take place? What are appropriate development interventions for an INGO? Thus, there is an attempt in the domestic programmes of OGB and OA to expose the third-dimensional power of assumed organisational identity, to re-shape the organisation's *habitus*, with the potential to disrupt the field and *doxa* of international development. If it is the case that development applies to places of poverty and powerlessness in all countries and is not just concerned with the 'poor' who live in the global South, then the domestic programmes working on issues of exclusion and injustice in the global North may offer new ways of looking at the programming of development INGOs and reflect broader understandings of what development is. These findings point the way forward to an approach to development in which its spaces, actors and practices are challenged and opened to fresh interpretations. If development practice and intervention design can incorporate considerations of the invisible power of myths and symbols, an ethical transformatory, decolonized development practice may be possible.

## Notes

1. Gaventa's approach was informed by Steven Lukes' (1974) work on power.
2. Media sources used included: *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times* 1994 – 1996, to coincide with the OGB domestic programme discussions.
3. This is the term used by low-paid care workers in Scotland who are allocated 15 minutes per elderly client for a home visit to ensure they have eaten and are safely in bed.
4. The 1994 meeting for Oxfam Trustees, staff, partners, volunteers and supporters.
5. Zakat is the tax paid by observant adult Muslims based on their surplus wealth and distributed to those in need. The distribution is considered to be an act of justice rather than charity ie the beneficiary has rights over the donor whose wealth is purified by the act of giving (Khan et al. 2009).

I confirm that there is no conflict of interest.

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