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# Editorial

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FEMINIST DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION THROUGH NEOLIBERAL TIMES

SIOBHÁN MADDEN

‘The story of We is the story of I and the story of She’.

‘We refuse to be “foot-soldiers” plugging the holes of neoliberal policies’.

‘But if you push on one side, and we push on the other, we can join our efforts to have a stronger voice and move a step ahead’.

‘Sasa! Action Now! We are Mná Sasa!’ (Banúlacht, 2011: 4-6)

The quotations above trace themes of subjectivity, relationality, gender, collectivity, knowledge, shifting positions, power, resistance, neoliberalism, solidarity, agency and action. These are all themes which, in different ways, are worked through the four Focus articles in this issue of *Policy and Practice* on the theme of ‘Development Education and Gender’. The quotations are from the Mná Sasa Manifesto (*Mná* is the Irish for ‘women’, *Sasa* is the Swahili for ‘now’), a document by grassroots feminists from Tanzania and Ireland. It connects their stories to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and a pedagogical project of building feminist grassroots solidarity movements. It was produced through solidarity exchanges between the Irish feminist development education (DE) organisation Banúlacht, the Tanzanian Gender Network Project and Kivulini Women’s Human Rights Organisation. But in 2012, Banúlacht closed, refusing to apply for core funding under Irish Aid’s new DE criteria which would compromise its political advocacy.

This brief fragment of feminist DE history speaks to the fraught context of feminist DE in neoliberal times. But in 2020, the ‘Beijing+25’ conference will be held in Mexico City and Paris. Already, feminist activists are strategising in recognition of the urgent political opportunity presented by the forum for resisting

neoliberalism and climate change. In this context, it is timely to put questions of feminism and gender on the DE ‘radar’. In the spirit of generating debate with regard to the importance of feminist DE, my editorial will explore some of the resonances and provocations which criss-cross through the four Focus articles. My own positioning is as a feminist educator with many years of involvement with Banúlacht, and with a core interest in alternative knowledges and rationalities for countering neoliberalism.

Eilish Dillon’s Focus article titled ‘Connecting the Personal and the Political: Feminist Perspectives on Development Education’, explicitly brings insights from feminism(s) to the fore for development education. Her nuanced exploration of feminism’s core theme, ‘linking the personal and the political’, is developed through interviews with three feminist development educators. The theme is emphasised by each woman, albeit from different ideological, theoretical, epistemological and geographical positionings. Bringing these perspectives into critical dialogue with discourses of DE among development educators identified in her previous research, Dillon argues that these feminist educators challenge many taken-for-granted understandings of ‘the political’ in DE. Normative understandings include the idea that DE is about ‘others’ or issues ‘out there’, and that the personal and political are linked by ‘starting with’ the personal (understood as a singular individual) and then ‘moving to’ the political (understood as the public, formal world). Feminist DE, however, where the personal and political are intimately connected, is about the ‘people in the room’. The personal is understood in collective and socially constructive terms, with power relations operating in all facets of life, including domestic and intimate relations. Dillon’s article is a highly textured and reflexive negotiation of multiple positionings which exemplifies her point of the importance of holding complex, diverse and sometimes contradictory realities in tension. This, she asserts, is DE which is simultaneously intensely political and extremely sensitive which is not an easy balance to strike. She argues that feminism adds to critical understandings of the political in DE, but it also calls on development educators to articulate their politics in ‘complex and nuanced but strong and clear terms’.

This is precisely what Ronaldo Munck and Tanja Kleibl do in their article, ‘NGOs and the Political Economy of International Development and

Development Education: An Irish Perspective'. While Dillon's article is concerned with DE's role in facilitating voices from the margins, these authors address how the aid industry works to discursively silence the voices of people in the global South. Two reported scandals frame their analysis: the sexual exploitation of young girls in Haiti by senior Oxfam GB officials, and the involvement of the Irish non-governmental organisation (NGO) Goal in financial corruption. Rather than aberrations, the authors argue that these abuses reflect systemic power inequalities endemic to the NGO/majority world relationship, including Irish NGOs. Their critical discourse analysis drills through sedimented layers of a discursive regime to expose supposedly 'moral' interventions as 'a frontline force of imperial intervention'.

A key object of critique is the notion of 'development' – the 'dominant central organising concept of our era'. They historicise and politically contextualise its successive iterations, from its positivist roots in 'order and progress', to the project of modernity, to the 1990s globalisation project of privatisation, through to a more recent technical discourse of results-based monitoring and top-down global indicators imposed by funders such as Irish Aid. Intertwined with and supporting these 'development' discourses are notions of 'civil society' and 'human rights', generally deemed to be uncontested goods. In parallel with this historicising narrative, the authors trace the cumulative effects of its cosy rhetoric which perversely silences critiques of structural violence and perpetuates and deepens colonial relationships. The subordination of Irish NGOs' own visions to financial growth and Irish Aid priorities is in tandem with a reduction of support for development education that 'would have kept that critical lens more active'. All this, argue Munck and Kleibl, provides an enabling environment for power abuses such as sexual harassment and financial wrongdoing. To interrupt the status quo, they propose a critically engaged research agenda involving the participation and engagement of the Irish NGO sector and, crucially, 'the critical development education sector'.

Following Dillon, however, one might wonder about the space for feminist DE voices in Munck's and Kleibl's construction of 'the critical development education sector'. Certainly, their elision of gender as an intersecting axis of power for addressing issues of sexual abuse is problematic. Eikenberry and Mirabella (2019) also argue that corruption practices exist because

NGOs are often treated as neutral/altruistic actors, but they insist on a critical feminist perspective to centre the politics of sexuality. They argue that this can help to highlight the gendered and racial structures of power in NGOs and the patriarchal and capitalist political economic environment which enables sexual corruption to persist (Ibid: 28). The twin feminist concern to valorise agency also raises questions about the extent to which Munck and Kleibl adopt totalising accounts of discourse which work to obscure resistances. Indeed, the ethical commitments animating their analysis - the position that sexual abuse is *wrong*, that we *should* be shocked - are constitutively forged from historical feminist struggles of linking the personal and the political. For Eikenberry and Mirabella, a critical feminist examination of NGOs requires ways to reclaim a solidarity society that addresses the conditions leading to violence against women. Rather than the top-down bureaucratic accountability usually favoured by donors, they argue for bottom-up accountability, including to those on the front lines of movements for social justice. Such a proposal clearly converges with that of Munck and Kleibl above, albeit with the explicit caveat that feminist development educators are sitting at the table.

Munck and Kleibl's analysis, however, also raises some provocative questions for feminism. Their analysis of the shift from state-organised capitalism to neoliberalism articulates with Fraser's (2013: 223) argument that previously unambiguously emancipatory feminist ideals are now 'fraught with ambiguity' (Ibid: 220). The welfare state, for instance, previously challenged by feminists as patriarchal, is now under attack from free-marketeters. In this context, she argues that feminist ideas are unwittingly supplying 'a good part of the romance that invests flexible capitalism with a higher meaning and a moral point' (Ibid). This opens up questions about the extent to which feminism's emphasis on linking the personal and political may also be resignified. If the action of feminist DE is 'the people in the room' (Dillon), is this just conversation which is 'an objective in its own right' so that 'it can never reach a consensus to act as a collective agency'? (Munck and Kleibl). Is 'the room' somehow symbolic of the neoliberal domestication of politics? Privatisation is not only an institutional matter: 'Today's politics is privatised, and privatised to the hilt' (Elliott, 2002:12). Fraser cautions (2003: 224), 'we for whom feminism is above all a movement for gender

justice need to become more historically self-aware as we operate on a terrain that is also populated by our uncanny double’.

This is the terrain which Erin Welsh critically negotiates in her article, ‘Assessing Microfinance as a Means of Socioeconomic Empowerment for Vulnerable Women in Jordan’. Welsh identifies two competing discourses of ‘empowerment: a neoliberal version which focuses on producing women as neoliberal subjects responsible for their own welfare through microfinance’; and a Marxist/Freirean radical one which conceptualises empowerment as ‘one component of collective liberation grounded in identifying and challenging oppressive systems’. Like Munck and Kleibl, she contests neoliberal discourses of development. However, her analysis highlights the multiple situated intersections between neoliberalism and patriarchy which produce gendered poverty. Thus, for instance, microfinance relies on and reinforces the sexist assumption that women’s labour is informal, flexible and non-contractable. Not only does it fail to challenge the wider neoliberal context of gendered poverty and violence against women, it also obfuscates these conditions. Behind the ‘empowerment’ rhetoric, the reality is one of precarious, short-term, informal employment, non-unionisation and the fracturing of class consciousness. Welsh argues for the role of Freirean conscientisation in order to interrupt the structures of oppression and facilitate a move from the ‘dominated consciousness’ of ‘neoliberal empowerment’ to the critical consciousness of ‘radical empowerment’. However, this is contingent on applying Freire’s conscientisation as intended. Welsh critiques appropriations of Freire which work within oppressive systems and therefore foreclose the possibility of critique. Like the previous contributors, she highlights the importance of reflexivity in DE in order to ongoingly interrogate discursive constructs such as ‘empowerment’.

Welsh’s contribution provides the opportunity to acknowledge the central importance of Freire for feminist DE (see also Dillon). His notion of praxis, in particular, has been adopted by many feminists (Ryan, 2001). However, his work has also been critiqued by scholars pointing to its universalist, masculinist, and rationalist assumptions (Weiler, 1991). Their point is not to reject Freire’s thinking but ‘add to it what we know about subjectivity’ (Ibid: 453). Indeed, the need to keep debates about subjectivity open is a political imperative



because this is a key site of neoliberal governance. Gill (2009) argues that the present moment is marked by a dramatically increased *intensity* of self-surveillance and regulation of women. This is exemplified in Welsh's article by the targeting of women for microfinance, and the shame produced by their 'failure' to repay loans. It is necessary therefore to be reflexive about reflexivity itself. Dillon, for instance, cites Alasuutari and Andreotti (2015) for whom a key skill in critical education is to 'unsettle' in order to resist the modern desires of mastery and control. Such unsettlings open possibilities for becoming attuned to other rationalities. Sharma (2008: 228) shows how neoliberal ideas 'confront other political rationalities' in her study of the governmentalisation of women's empowerment in India. She argues that empowerment is not simply a regulative discourse but a 'contentious, and unpredictable site on which both conforming and unruly subjects, communities, and struggles take form' (Ibid: 223). These popular struggles compel democracy to function and look like it is meant to: 'not an exclusive and regulated domain of polite conversation indulged in by privileged members of society but an unruly political theatre' (Ibid: 236).

An analogous confrontation of rationalities takes place in the fourth Focus article, 'Women on the Frontlines of Resistance to Extractivism', by V'cenza Cirefice and Lynda Sullivan. These are not frontlines of polite conversation, but of rural and indigenous women in the Americas fighting for their survival. The specific issue here is the mining and extraction required where renewable energy is being assimilated into the neoliberal agenda. There is also a gendered dimension to mining impacts; women are in contact with natural resources for subsistence, but there is also a link between sexual violence and the mining industry. This is why women are leading the resistance. Such resistances are also the scenes of a confrontation between world views; while extraction sees the world through relations of 'taking' and dominance, these women's resistances are embedded in alternative meanings. For example, indigenous Mapuche women fighting against fracking in Argentina have no language for 'natural resource'. This respect for indigenous women's knowledge is enabled by the sensitising theoretical frameworks of socialist/materialist ecofeminism and feminist political ecology. Accordingly, capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy are understood as connected. Decolonising practices then require the elimination of all types of domination. Women's experiences are not homogenised or

essentialised. Nor is their resistance idealised but is understood in relation to gender relations and resource management. These frameworks seek to move 'from a dualistic, extractive, mechanistic, anthropocentric worldview to relations of an interconnected, relational and biocentric world'. The authors highlight the patriarchal capitalist worldview as a legacy of Cartesian binaries of thought. Finally, they make suggestions for DE on how to use the case studies they present.

Implicit in Cirefice and Sullivan's identification of Cartesian dualism as setting the foundations for the patriarchal capitalist/colonial world view is the unavoidable conclusion that our current system cannot be eliminated without an intersectional feminism. Attention to the framework of binaries also provides a way of synthesising some aspects of the above articles. Thus, Dillon's insistence that linking the personal and the political cannot be accomplished within an individual-society binary, and her concern for holding complexities, reflects a refusal of binary terms. Munck and Kleibl's critique of bureaucratic governance in the aid sector can also be linked to feminist critiques of bureaucracies which contest the objectification of social relations installed by subject-object and emotion-thought binaries (Ferguson, 1984). In Welsh's account of microfinance, women's disadvantaged position within the capitalist economy is constituted, not only by the public/private binaries, but also the ontological disregard of the body and its need for food and shelter.

But here we must pause at Cirefice and Sullivan's perhaps too hasty move to insert the women's stories into the DE classroom. There are hazards here in their possible absorption into existing 'folds of the known' (Pillow, 2003:192). Paradoxically, one might say that a DE concerned with 'the other' leaves untouched 'our' frames and habits of thought, with the contingent risks of exoticisation. Yet, the ramifications of Cirefice and Sullivan's own epistemological framework provide a return to the feminist terms of Dillon's 'linking the personal and the political' in conditions that do not, after all, partake in their recuperation by neoliberalism. On the contrary, these alternative rationalities, based on the dissolution of binary thinking, subvert the rationalities which ultimately nourish neoliberalism. At stake in the 'people in the room' is embodiment, and a DE therefore which is about 'bodies in struggle rather than simply ideas in contention' (Lyons, 1999: 34). This opens up emotion as a

feminist epistemological resource, as registered by Caoimhe Butterly in Eilish Dillon's article. Crucially, emotions must be understood as mediated rather than reified – what Rosaldo (1984) calls 'embodied thoughts'. But 'the people in the room' also has a temporal dimension in the embodied relational moment of *Now*. It provides for the actualised as well as philosophical derailing of habits of mind linked to the temporalities of modernity and 'development', indexed in the linearity and closures involved in 'moving from the personal to the political'.

The four articles combine in different (although not always explicit) ways to make an important and exciting contribution to foregrounding the politics of gender, feminism and feminist movement through critical DE methodologies. An overarching theme is that of politics and action, including attention to how their meanings are slippery and open to contestation. A related theme is the importance of reflexivity in order to resist becoming (too?) entangled in the neoliberal project. Intersectionality has also emerged as an important theme in order to attend to how gender/patriarchy intersects in complex and situated ways with other axes of power, including capitalism and colonialism. Interestingly, there has been relatively limited attention to the specificity of feminist epistemological frameworks and their relevance for DE. It is my hope that this issue will spark curiosity and interest in this theme.

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# Focus

## CONNECTING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

EILISH DILLON

**Abstract:** This article explores feminist perspectives on development education (DE). It situates feminism and DE within the context of debates on feminist epistemologies, critical pedagogy and the politics of DE, and it argues that 'feminism is for everybody' (hooks, 2000). Drawing on the experiences of development educators, in particular some who identify as feminist, it focuses on DE from different radical and poststructuralist feminist perspectives. In short, it argues that feminism adds to critical understandings of the political in DE primarily through its focus on the links between the personal and the political. When applied to DE learning processes, feminism highlights exclusion on the one hand and agency on the other. In doing so, feminism supports other approaches to DE which emphasise a focus on the politics of DE and learning processes founded on interrogating and challenging power relations - critically, radically, sensitively and reflexively.

**Key Words:** Feminism; Development Education; Global Citizenship Education; Politics; Discourses of Development Education.

### Introduction

'We should all be feminists', Chimamanda Adiche has popularly argued. Echoing bell hooks' (2000) view that 'feminism is for everybody', at the recent annual Dóchas (Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations) conference (May, 2019), the two keynote speakers Winnie Byanyima of Oxfam International and Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen of Plan International, argued that development organisations need to embrace feminism if they are to challenge ubiquitous and persistent gender inequality, oppression and violence against women in our societies. So, it seems that it's not that special or radical these days to argue the legitimacy of a feminist perspective or standpoint.

And, yet, talk of feminism is loudly silent in the literature on development education (DE). While there are many constructions of feminism, I am suggesting here that feminist epistemology, or ‘feminist ways of knowing’ (Ryan, 2001), in its contribution to critical pedagogy and otherwise, is far more significant for DE than the relative absence of reference to it in the literature might suggest.

In this article, I explore feminist perspectives on DE. I draw on research I conducted with development educators on discourses of DE in Ireland in 2016 (Dillon, 2017; 2018), as well as short interviews conducted in 2019 with three development educators who identify as feminist. While gender and feminism emerged in some of the interviews conducted in 2016, for this article, I wanted to augment that research with interviews with a few purposefully chosen educators I have known through my work, and who were not involved in the initial research. These are: Dorothy Tooman, gender specialist at the DE Network – Liberia (DEN – L) and political aspirant for the Liberian senate elections in October 2020; Nbombi Nare, co-ordinator of the GRAIL Training for Transformation Programme in Kleinmond, South Africa; and Caoimhe Butterly, who facilitates workshops on human rights, social justice movements and forced migration with a variety of groups in Ireland and internationally, and who is a trainee psychotherapist.

I am arguing here that in highlighting the relationship between the personal and the political, feminism calls for development educators and DE researchers to articulate their politics more clearly. It challenges development educators not only to understand women’s experiences of oppression, exclusion or agency and power, but to integrate ‘the personal and the political’.

While most development educators are aware of the need to link the personal and the political, as evident in my research (Dillon, 2017), there is a tendency among some to focus on learners’ experiences to the detriment of the structures which shape them, or to emphasise action which has little bearing on participants’ lived experience. A focus on feminism, I argue, helps us to reconceptualise the personal and the political as interconnected rather than as two ends of a pedagogical spectrum. In acknowledging women’s different experiences of exclusion, oppression and agency, feminism emphasises DE which is based on

a nuanced and complex understanding of people's experiences of marginalisation on the one hand and agency, challenging unjust power relations and self-reflexivity on the other. As such, feminist epistemologies contribute to expanding rather general discussions of the political in the literature on DE (Bourn, 2015), as well as constructions of DE as being about 'the other' (as highlighted by Andreotti, 2006). Before exploring these issues in greater detail, I begin with a short reflection on my own encounters with feminism.

My early life experience of feminism and gender power relations was shaped in a family with three sisters and a strong, independent mother who was acutely aware of gender inequality. For most of my youth in Ireland, feminism was considered to be something for 'radicals', not people like me, though I could not accept many of the gender roles or expectations ascribed to me as a girl. As a teenager, I became aware that I benefited from women's rights campaigns and from European Union (EU) equality legislation and increasingly conscious of oppression and injustice against women around the world. In my 20s and 30s, I was influenced by post-development thinking including Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart's (1995) edited book *Feminism, Postmodernism, Development*, and Anne B. Ryan's (2001) book *Feminist Ways of Knowing*. They offered a critique of simplistic notions of feminism and complex understandings of gender inequality and power relations.

Thus, in the early 2000s, at least partly influenced by these books, I became active in Banúlacht, 'a feminist organisation committed to political action' (2003: 1), and I participated, with others, in the development of its statement of feminist principles (ibid). In short, when asked, I often described Banúlacht as a 'feminist DE organisation'. In 2004, Siobhan Madden and I presented a paper we co-authored at a conference in University College Dublin. A key theme of the paper was the tension experienced by Banúlacht in trying to maintain its critical feminist stance while dealing with the limitations of state DE funding requirements. Since then, my understanding of feminisms has been honed through personal experience as well as through engagement with feminist epistemology and critical pedagogies in teaching and research. In this article, I draw on these experiences as well as the experiences and perspectives of others.



## Politics and DE

The importance of the political in DE has been highlighted in the DE literature. Hillary (2013), for example, has argued for ‘putting the politics back in’. This has been echoed by McCloskey’s call (2018: 65) for ‘more critical and political activism to be central to education practice if citizens are to be equal to the global challenges that confront us all’. On the other hand, much of the talk about politics in relation to DE is either tied up with discussions about activism or it is quite general, and understandings of politics are often assumed (Bourn, 2015). As evidenced in my research (Dillon, 2017), development educators are often wary of or uncertain about politics. While many acknowledge the political role that DE can or does play in certain circumstances, some talk about their concern that DE is too directive or prescriptive. At the same time, there is a sense that if DE is value-based and directed towards social transformation, it is bound to be ‘political’. But what does ‘being political’ in DE actually mean?

The research I conducted in 2016 found that, among the 30 DE facilitators and key informants involved, there was a reluctance to talk about the politics of DE, especially when compared to their relative ease in talking about values. Though 17 of the DE facilitators and five key informants interviewed acknowledged that DE is political, there was little agreement on what this means in practice. Their understandings of the political in relation to DE varied from those who argued that DE is about ‘politics with a small p’, or that development educators ‘need to be careful when it comes to politics’ to those who suggested that ‘power and politics are at the core of DE’ or that ‘DE is deeply political’. Nine of the development educators interviewed understood the politics of DE mostly in technical terms. This involves an understanding of politics as formal, where the role of individual citizens is to appeal to elite decision-makers to enact legislation which is favourable for justice or equality.

On the other hand, a technical understanding of politics is also characterised by talk of individuals realising change in their own lives at a personal level rather with little reference to power structures. Eleven talked about politics in more critical terms, with references to the role of DE in challenging unjust structures and power relations, but many of these emphasised the structural, public or dominating politics rather than how these connect with people’s lived

experience. Where the links between people's lived experience and structures of power were made, it was often assumed that DE starts with the personal and moves towards the political. As such, there was a tendency among development educators to under-emphasise the connection between the personal and the political, a key insight of feminism, as discussed below.

### **Understanding feminisms**

When many people think about feminism, they focus on women. Despite that, there are many feminisms and they are as much individual perspectives and standpoints as they are reflective of movements and a variety of ideological and theoretical positions (Harding, 1987; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Butler, 1990; Skeggs, 1994, 1997; Smith, 1999; Ryan, 2001; Fraser, 2013). Most students of development studies are introduced to different theories (and related policies and practices) of gender and development. These are usually discussed in chronological terms as 'WID, WAD and GAD' and are sometimes associated with different trends in feminist activism and theory - liberal feminism, socialist feminism and critical and later post-structuralist and postmodern feminism (Marchand and Parpart, 1995).

Such representations of gender and development or feminist theoretical positions highlight that feminism isn't just about women but about power relations, identities, the economy, politics and the social constructions of gender identities, roles and relationships. They also signal some diversity in approaches, ideological positions and philosophies. Though it is outside the scope of this article to present a history of feminisms or of different trends in feminism, Anne B Ryan's comments are worth noting on the matter. For her: 'feminism is far from being a unified body of thought... feminist poststructuralists recognise identity differences and power differentials, in common with other 'branches' of feminism, but avoid speaking with authority for "women" or for "feminists"' (2001: 7). She goes on to argue that differences between types of feminism are 'never as clear-cut in practice as they may seem' (2001: 42).

These differences in emphasis are evident in what Dorothy Tooman, Ntombi Nare and Caoimhe Butterly highlight as important in feminism. Dorothy Tooman's practical perspective sees feminism as 'an idea that helps people

investigate, analyse and understand the actual root causes of women's exclusion, oppression and marginalisation in society and to identify tangible solutions for more equal relationships between men and women and for a better world'. Ntombi Nare explains the influence of radical feminism and DE on her work, and the importance of raising 'awareness of exploitation or layers of exclusion by women that are social and structurally mainstreamed'. For her, it is asking questions and addressing structural exclusion: 'how do we change the social norms and traditions? How do we radically uproot those and what are the new seeds we need to plant that can also be mainstreamed and internalised?... radical feminism is addressing the structural exclusion of women... we need to address those structures and their roles and to explore possible ways of changing laws'.

For Caoimhe Butterly, reflecting a radical and poststructuralist perspective, feminism is 'a deconstruction of power that goes beyond gender'. It is 'an ethics of accountability... and care in terms of how we understand power and it's also an overt understanding of positionality'. In that sense, she mentions the importance of intersectionality and the plurality of feminisms. For her, feminism 'means subversion... and disruption of status quos of both education and of politics that are lacking an understanding of power... at its best I think it's liberation but it's liberation that goes beyond gender and I think that is in a way what a lot of the conversations and practice around intersectionality is getting at'.

These perspectives on feminism identify different understandings of power and politics, and different emphases in terms of structures of oppression and exclusion, and women's positionality and agency in relation to them. While one might be tempted to focus on the commonalities among feminist theorists and activists, it is important to remember that it is a diverse and sometimes divided field, with various influences on epistemology and approaches to pedagogy. Highlighting diversity, as the feminist contributors here do, shows that feminism is far from just being about 'including women' or 'women's issues' in DE and that politics needs to be considered in complex and nuanced but strong and clear terms.

## **Feminist epistemologies and pedagogies**

Feminist epistemology is concerned with questions around knowledge and understandings of the world from different feminist perspectives. Numerous writers have highlighted different feminist philosophies and the pedagogies associated with them. While some feminist epistemologies draw on discussions of critical pedagogy (Chow et al, 2003) and on the work of Paulo Freire, others are critical of them. For Brid Connolly, feminist educators attempt ‘to create pedagogical situations which empower students, demystify canonical knowledge and clarify relations of domination and subordination, which are marked by gender, class, poverty and other differences’ (2008: 60).

Dorothy Tooman talks about Paulo Freire’s influence on her education work and about the importance of conscientisation at grassroots level. Talking about DE in quite different terms to many in Ireland or Europe, from her 21 years working with Development Education Network – Liberia (DEN-L), she sees it as being about transforming the lives of participants, many of whom are among the most marginalised in society. It helps ‘people increase their skills and analysis to drive their own solutions’. She feels that in Liberia and internationally, DE has become more marginalised and she describes her frustration at many years of hard work at grassroots level which can be ‘thrashed by decisions from above’. Feminism has helped her ‘to see better that I am an agent of change’, she says, linking this to her decision to run for political office at a national level.

Also influenced by Freire’s work and critical pedagogy, Ntombi Nare sees a feminist approach to radical DE as different to other approaches. She says:

“first of all, you have to acknowledge that women have been excluded. That’s number one. That the privileges of women have been limited time immemorial ... even if the laws are in place, the practice can be totally different. So, the dedication or the commitment to translate makes it, the feminist radical education, different to any other because we have a focused area. We have a problem. We are questioning and trying to explore what works, what enables the practice”.

For her, addressing these ‘problems’ means that ‘the structures and the systems have to be changed .... They have to be questioned ... women have to challenge these structures and systems and to create spaces for themselves’.

Feminist epistemologies have also advanced thinking on the value of knowledge based on women’s standpoints, identities and experiences. What this has meant in practice is valuing the ‘everyday/every night’ lived realities of women (Smith, 1999). Influenced by standpoint theory, feminist epistemologies have highlighted the value of women’s experiences which are often silenced in mainstream accounts of realities. At the same time, post-structural, Black or postcolonial feminisms, for example, identify that women’s experiences cannot be homogenised or essentialised. As such, there are on-going debates about how to acknowledge women’s different and shared experiences (including exclusion, oppression and agency) without essentialising women or universalising some women’s experiences.

In highlighting the importance of real lived experience, without reifying it, feminist epistemologies highlight the importance of valuing the personal in multiple ways. Caoimhe Butterly emphasises emotional connections in critical learning processes, including emotional experiences of and responses to trauma. She suggests that:

“if you’re opening up topics that have potentially painful resonances for young people in terms of their lived experience of injustice, there has to be... facilitation that responds to an emotional register in the room and that is conscious of trauma... not a pathologisation of those processes ... how do you make sure that a young learner, a young participant comes into a room and leaves that room feeling validated, feeling held, feeling seen... How do you deal with the more complex, emotional, subtle glimpses of material in a room in a way that honours them?”

In challenging the gendered power relations implicit in the so-called ‘neutral’ and ‘objectivist’ assumptions of positivism, with feminism the subjective and the personal come centre stage. Along with other critical epistemologies such as participatory and postcolonial epistemologies (Spivak, 1988), feminist

epistemologies open up the space for valuing knowledge and personal experiences ‘from the margins’ and for challenging dominant ways of knowing. Calling for challenging power relations in education processes, Caoimhe questions if DE is ‘extractive’, and she criticises processes that are not based on self-reflective practice among facilitators. She calls for educators to question learning which is not ‘authentically emancipatory’ or which represents ‘a wasted moment’. In doing so, she highlights an important insight from critical and feminist pedagogy more broadly, the importance of self-reflexivity, explored in relation to DE by Hannah Alasuutari and Vanessa Andreotti (2015). They argue that ‘self-reflexivity offers a way to understand the complex constitution of subjectivities, the interdependence of knowledge and power, and of what is sub- or un-conscious in our relationships with the world’ (2015: 80). For them, a key skill in critical education is to ‘unsettle’. They argue that ‘when the self is not unsettled, the modern desires of mastery and control, and the desires underlying racial, gendered, and class hierarchies both historically and contemporarily are left unquestioned’ (2015: 81).

### **The personal is political in feminism and DE**

Over many years, one of the key phrases associated with feminism has been ‘the personal is political’. For Banúlacht, adopting a women-focused analysis of feminism, for example, this meant that:

“the personal is political and the political is personal: women’s personal experiences are shaped by wider social and political decisions and circumstances. Our political, economic and social analysis is based on a critique of patriarchal structures, systems and ideologies of male values, interests and supremacy that have systematically and disproportionately denied women the conditions and possibilities for reaching their human potential” (2003: 1).

Banúlacht went on to highlight that women are not a homogenous group: ‘women have a key role to play in shaping the social and political contexts of their lives and have a right to have and to make choices that impact upon them’ (2003: 2).

Though there is not one feminism and feminisms have changed over time, in terms of feminist epistemologies, there is a clear sense that the personal is infused with the political, and subjects are constructed in complex contexts and have agency in different ways therein. Such an understanding sees the personal and political as intimately connected rather than two ends of an experiential, political or education spectrum.

*The personal and political in discourses of DE and GCE – reflection on research with DE facilitators*

The relevance of the personal and the political in DE emerges at the juxtaposition of considerations around DE learning processes and understandings of the politics of DE. For some, the political in DE relates to how it is facilitated and practiced, the kinds of learning spaces constructed, its emphasis on learners' experiences and conscientisation. For others, it is in the action dimension of DE where learners are facilitated to understand key structures of oppression and where DE is regarded as having a transparent political agenda of social justice and transformation.

While such debates are evident in the literature (Ní Chasaide, 2009; Selby and Kagawa, 2011; Hillary, 2013; McCloskey, 2016), they also emerged in my research with DE facilitators in Ireland (Dillon, 2017). There, I attempted to understand tensions around DE and politics, and different understandings of DE more broadly, in terms of understanding different discourses of DE. Based on how development educators talk about DE, drawing on the work of Andreotti (2014) and Krause (2010), among others, I analysed these discourses as overlapping, sometimes contradictory and complex. In simple terms, on one side, there is the liberal and technical discourse with its assumptions about the importance of individual experience and action for change. A liberal discourse prioritises the individual over the collective and individual relationships and agency are regarded as distinct from, and more important than, the structural. Here, learning experiences and reflection are limited to the personal (Andreotti, 2014) and politics is about giving voice to the individual or realising change at a personal rather than a structural level. For some of those involved in my research (Dillon, 2017), DE starts with knowledge acquisition or mindset change and

moves from there to action for change. This implies that there is a kind of progressive graduation from the individual to the collective and from the personal to the political. This is compartmentalised, evolutionary and dichotomised thinking that does not sufficiently take account of the complexities of how the personal and the political are connected (Andreotti, 2014).

Though some involved in the research seemed to reflect a liberal discourse, most drew more on a critical one. Similar to Vanessa Andreotti's distinction between 'soft' and 'critical' DE (2006), this discourse is based on the assumption that the personal and the political cannot be separated and that power relations are complex. As such, DE is seen to play a significant role in facilitating understandings of how power works and in challenging unjust power structures. This is similar to the Freirean-inspired DE talked about by Dorothy Tooman and the radical DE that Ntombi Nare describes. In critical DE there is an emphasis on DE knowledge as process; critical thinking and understanding of 'root causes'; critique of power relations and effects at local and global levels; and personal and political reflection on agency and structure. In this case, DE facilitators talk about DE as an integrated process, leading to critical action and activism, similar to Freire's understanding of praxis. Despite this, among some who reflect a critical discourse, there can be a tendency to under-emphasise the connection between the personal and the political, with structural, public and dominating politics the chief focus (Dillon, 2017).

Some DE facilitators interviewed exhibited what I call a 'post-critical discourse of DE' (Dillon, 2017), as they questioned stereotypes, scrutinising the values which are regarded as underpinning DE and encouraging themselves and other facilitators to question their own experience. Reflecting Andreotti's understanding of self-reflexivity (2014), in this context, DE can be viewed as a 'politics of democratic struggle, without a politics with guarantees' (Giroux, 2004: 36). Here, politics is not focused 'out there' or on the 'other'. It tries to develop skills to hold complex, diverse and sometimes contradictory realities in tension (Todd, 2009). Where DE is understood in these complex and interconnected ways, it resonates with feminist understandings of 'the personal and the political', as discussed below.



### *Feminists' perspectives on 'The Personal is Political' and DE*

In the recent interviews I conducted, from a feminist point of view, Dorothy Tooman talks about 'the personal and the political' in terms of the interconnection between personal experience and structural factors affecting people's lives. For her, it means that 'whatever we experience has bigger and greater connections that are political, that are formed in a system or structure and through decision-making. Whatever happens to people may be tiny but it has a bigger picture'. For Ntombi Nare, drawing on the African concept of 'Ubuntu', a community-based philosophy of relationality and non-individuality, identity is not just individual: 'I am an individual who is part of the universal and that universal has many layers... This universal cannot be made without individuals like me so it becomes political'. Caoimhe Butterly sees it as 'an acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of injustice and discrimination in our world'. She argues that it is only 'through a prism of extreme privilege' that one can try to deny that everything is political and suggests that 'there's very little in my life, I actually can think of nothing in my life that is not political in one way or another'.

These educators emphasise the importance of seeing the personal in the political and the political in the personal. In so doing, they challenge many of the taken-for-granted understandings of the political in DE. In this view, the personal is not confined to the realm of the single subjective individual but is understood in collective and socially constructive terms, and the political is not regarded as something only for the public, formal world, but as tied up in domestic, intimate, local and interpersonal relations. Politics is not regarded as being just about formal power but about power relations as they operate in all facets of life. Ryan, for example, argues that it is a mistake for feminists to call for work to "move beyond" personal development... the personal should not be regarded as constituting merely a "first step" which is less important than structures' (2001: 14). The feminist educators involved here question any form of DE which does not take account of participants' (different, complex and intersectional) lived experience while acknowledging and questioning various layers of oppression.

## **Feminist perspectives on DE learning processes**

In their edited book, *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*, though not specifically feminist, Alasuutari and Andreotti (2015) echo feminist and other poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques in their description of their attempt to ‘emphasize the connections between knowledge, power, positionality, cultural assumptions and identity amongst educators and researchers engaged with global citizenship and international development’ (2015: 3). On the other hand, they argue against initiatives, feminist or otherwise, which:

“foreclose the complex historical, cultural and political nature of the issues, identities and perspectives embedded in global/local processes and events and in the production of knowledge about the self, the other and the world” (2015: 1).

Building on these concerns, there are many potential insights for DE from different feminist perspectives, epistemologies, movements and practices, as suggested above. In addition to reflections around the connection between the personal and the political, the feminist critical educators interviewed for this article highlight the importance of feminist radical education and collective learning processes which challenge power relations.

Dorothy Tooman explains the importance of a ‘gender action programme’ rather than a ‘women only’ focus in DEN-L’s work. In the context of a society where men make many of the decisions, DEN-L’s experience, she says, was that this focus on women didn’t work. Even if, for example, women acquired property, it was often taken away from them by their spouses. For her, a gender approach which views the personal and political as relational rather than ‘for women only’ and which does not exclude men, has allowed for more acknowledgment of the historical oppression of women on the part of men in the community.

Ntombi Nare focuses more specifically on women’s experiences of exclusion and argues that ‘if we are to do feminist radical education we need to name it. We need to be certain that we are talking about women’s exclusion and women claiming their identity and their space and using it’. As a member of

‘The GRAIL Women’s Movement’, she describes ‘the significance of the type of DE, of feminist radical education, that I have dedicated my life to work on, just those small meanings that have to be seeded and they grow on their own’. For Ntombi, ‘what is special about a feminist approach is that there is an acknowledgement that women have been excluded. I think that’s the key for me... “feminist forms of radical” acknowledges this structural exclusion, sometimes structural and economic, social and economic and political exclusion of women. We have to acknowledge that and then we can start working with it’.

Caoimhe Butterly talks about the relevance of feminism for DE learning processes in that DE:

“is a collective process co-created and curated within whatever room you go into... [it] has integrity and depth, [and is] something that’s honest to ourselves and to others, because I think sometimes there’s a worrying lack of honesty around our own power and privilege but a worrying lack of honesty around how is DE a radical departure if we’re not deconstructing power”.

She calls for DE learning processes which support ‘the nuance, the depth, the complexity, the empathy and the politicisation of younger learners’. For her, young people ‘understand what’s going so disastrously wrong in the world on so many levels, climate change, climate crisis, conflict, inequalities, but they get it. They really get it’. She suggests that development educators need to ‘respond to the gravitas of that... that means that sometimes it’s ok just to hold the space in a calm, regulated way not to do the cheerleading, not to have the “wake up shake ups”’. It also, she suggests, recognises that:

“active learning can be subtle, collective learning, that we can have fun, we can make it creative, we can make it engaging but sometimes I think too much serious depth is lost in the need to make everything shiny and happy. Teenagers know that this world is not shiny and happy but they also know that they have a lot of potential to change that”.

For her, there's a 'tendency within DE to tie everything with this kind of neat little bow and the neat, little bow is the action. And I don't think there's an understanding that the process is the action, that the conversation is the action'.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, I have explored some feminist perspectives on DE especially in the light of the experience of three development educators who identify as feminist. In summary, though there are many feminisms, education influenced by feminism identifies and acknowledges exclusion and challenges unequal power relations. It focuses on ethics and the role of the facilitator, as framed by feminist educators here, as authentic and radical. It is education that tries to put experience at the heart of learning processes. In challenging dominant knowledge paradigms, it emphasises and values subjectivity, reflexivity and experiences and knowledge from the margins.

Questions about the relationship between the personal and the political have been debated in feminism and in DE in different ways for many years, and have also been explored here. As indicated in my research, and discussed above, the relationship between the personal and the political is framed differently in different discourses of DE. Feminist perspectives explored here highlight the interconnection between the personal and the political where individuality is not primary or separate and where 'everything is political'. For DE, a key insight from feminist considerations of 'the personal and the political' is that learning does not 'start with' the personal and 'move' to the political but that they need to be addressed as interrelated at all times. Where development educators see the personal and political as connected in this way, they challenge power relations and structures which exclude but also reflexively engage in critical questioning of how DE can, as Caoimhe suggests, 'be extractive'. This is DE which is on the one hand intensely political but on the other extremely sensitive. It is about validating people's real and varied lived experience while, as Ntombi puts it, 'uprooting existing social norms and planting new seeds'. It is not about development of or for 'others' or development issues 'out there', but 'people in the room'. This is not easy or simple DE. It is complex and radical and it demands not just to be thought or talked about this way but to be practiced as such.

In exploring feminist perspectives on DE, this article also attempts to advance thinking on the politics of DE. In so doing, it highlights the importance of moving beyond rather generalised understandings and discussions of politics, which is common in the literature on DE (Bourn, 2015). It opens up diverse understandings of the political in feminism, including different emphases on liberation from oppression and exclusion, or on the importance of reflexivity and intersectionality. As such, it suggests the need for DE not only to forefront the political but to acknowledge different political positions, analyses and actions (as well as their different effects) in different constructions of DE. Khoo, in her challenging article on human rights reminds us of Santos' 'sociology of absences' and of the importance of being 'attentive to silences' (2017: 48). In highlighting the importance of voice in DE, she echoes bell hooks in questioning who speaks, who listens and why. In bringing to the fore insights from feminism for DE, this article highlights the importance of giving voice to different experiences of marginalisation, power and agency in DE, as well as acknowledging the important role that feminism and other critical and subaltern epistemologies have played in how we understand the world today. It also suggests the importance of bringing other experiences, critiques, perspectives and movements from the margins more centre stage in DE, both in terms of what they share in common with feminisms and what specific and different insights they might bring.

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#### **Notes:**

1. I use the term 'development education' throughout this article recognising the debates about the limitations of this term while assuming that the arguments presented here also apply to similar educations such as 'global citizenship education', 'global learning' or 'education for sustainable development'.
2. In 2016, I conducted in-depth Doctoral research (interviews, questionnaires and workshops) with 21 DE facilitators and nine key informants in Ireland. This adopted a critical analysis of discourse approach to understanding different discourses of DE. It also focused on how DE discourses are shaped within the context of the politics and economics of DE in the Irish context.
3. My sincere thanks to all those who contributed to my research in 2016 and to Caoimhe, Dorothy and Ntombi for most recent interviews. Thanks, also, to Dr. Niamh Gaynor of Dublin City University and the anonymous reviewer for very helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this article.

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# NGOS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION: AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE

RONALDO MUNCK AND TANJA KLEIBL

**Abstract:** In Ireland the role of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is rarely interrogated. There is, rather, a shared discourse across the government, NGO and academic sectors which does not really encourage critical enquiry. One of the reasons is, arguably, the reduction of support for development education that would have kept that critical lens more active. In light of the recent Oxfam and Goal scandals, we must ask if development NGOs are now ‘part of the problem’ rather than ‘part of the solution’ to use a 1960s phrase. After a brief context-setting section *Why Now?* which discusses recent events around the NGOs, we start our enquiry with a set of *Deconstructions* of relevant terms such as ‘development’, ‘civil society’, ‘human rights’ and the term ‘NGO’ itself, too often referred to in reverential or uncritical ways in the NGO literature and more widely. We then move on to consider whether it is a case of *Irish exceptionalism* which explains why the political economy of development and NGOs debate in Ireland seems so insulated from international debates. Finally, we open up a *Discussion* which tries to pose some of the main matters arising from our enquiry. We understand our discussion might seem challenging to some, but we hope to spark an open debate on whether NGOs are part of the solution or, rather, part of the problem. This debate is too important to be left to the NGOs alone and requires the critical engagement of development education we would argue.

**Key words:** NGOs; Oxfam; Goal; International Development; Development Education; Colonialism; Neoliberalism.

## Why now?

Reports broke in early 2018 that senior Oxfam GB officials had sexually exploited young (possibly underage) girls during the Haiti emergency of 2010-2011. The UK Charity Commission has since reported on these events and its overall conclusion, in the dry language of enquiries, is that:

“No charity is more important than the people it serves or the mission it pursues. The charity’s governance and culture with regard to safeguarding has repeatedly fallen below standards expected and failed to meet promises made” (Charity Commission, 2019: 32).

What was noticeable when the scandal broke was that there was not really a shocked reaction in the ‘development sector’. Shaista Aziz – a past aid worker with Oxfam and other organisations declared that ‘I wasn’t surprised. Nor was I surprised when it became clear that it had been covered up and that further allegations of sexual abuse, bullying, harassment and intimidation in the aid sector soon followed’ (Aziz, 2018). Was there then a shared and accepted understanding that the power relations between the big NGOs and the ‘developing’ countries would probably lead precisely to such abuses? It transpired as revelations followed that this was clearly not an individual case of abuse but, rather, a structural, and indeed sector-wide, feature of these large, well-funded, well-connected and still widely respected organisations. NGOs are part of the problem it would seem at first glance, from both a gender and a majority world perspective.

In Ireland we have had the quite different, but equally damaging in its impact, débacle in relation to Goal, the third largest development NGO in the state, which has to some extent been ‘buried’. A United States (US) government report in 2016 had expressed concerns around three areas: ‘procurement system weaknesses, mishandling of conflicts of interest and inadequate financial function’ (MacCormaic, 2017). The story which emerged of collusion and bid-rigging in Southern Turkey, where the aid operations in Syria were centred, eventually went far beyond these seemingly innocuous phrases. In fact, the US Office of the Inspector General was investigating ‘actors alleged to be directly engaged in corruption and conflict of interest [that] included both field office staff and members of Goal’s senior management team’ (ibid). In the event both the US and Irish funders of Goal decided to accept the resignation of a senior officer (as happened in the Oxfam case linked to sexual abuse) and a commitment to ‘put their own house in order’ as sufficient remedy. We might well surmise that Oxfam and Goal were deemed by governments to be ‘too big to fail’ as were the major banks in Ireland and elsewhere when the 2008-09 financial crisis broke.

Again, this points towards NGOs being clearly part of the problem of unregulated contemporary globalised capitalism (see Wallace, 2004).

To understand the underlying dynamics of the politics of development NGOs we need to examine critically the overall discursive structures and power relationships related to the aid infrastructure. This is a more specific question than that raised by Dambisa Moyo in her influential critique of development aid from a very different position to our own, namely a pro market 'neoliberal' perspective (Moyo, 2009) which questions whether aid 'works' as it were. We are, rather, asking whether aid systems, including control apparatuses such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, are silencing or oppressing the voices of marginalised people rather than promoting equality, ownership and accountability for those affected by poverty and voicelessness as they claim. Those voices might help reduce power abuses, whilst power-blind M&E systems would tend to re-produce or worsen the top-down features of the aid sector and hence function oppressively.

Social transformation and empowerment to achieve social justice are important goals of development and critical discourse analysis alike, the latter seeking to establish the role of discourses in creating unequal power relationships. Hence we will now apply critical discourse analysis to 'deconstruct' some of the key terms such as development, civil society and NGOs in order to confront these concepts with development practice. The Oxfam and Goal scandals around sexual and financial abuse respectively must be seen as part of this broader set of structural issues and cannot plausibly be seen as mere aberrations. They highlight the general power dynamics of the NGO/majority world relationship, the macho modus operandi most of the more aggressive ones adopt, their cavalier attitude towards due process, and the prioritisation of the organisation above development goals, which explains the denials and cover-ups that have occurred in both cases. We see the events described in a nutshell above as just the tip of the iceberg, not an anomaly, and symptomatic of a much wider structural malaise that is not really acknowledged (at least openly) in the NGO milieu. We would argue that the many sincere members and supporters of the development NGOs deserve the type of open, self-critical analysis we are trying to foster here. Indeed, our research

involved a number of conversations (we would not call them interviews) with present and past Irish NGO workers that, necessarily have been anonymised.

## **Deconstructions**

Deconstruction does not mean the same as to destroy, rather it is a double movement of simultaneous affirmation and undoing (see Derrida, 1981). It was originally deployed in philosophy and, for example, by feminist theorists to expose the male bias of the European intellectual tradition. Deconstruction has also been deployed in relation to development studies (e.g. Crush 1995, Munck, 1999) opening them up to post-modernist perspectives. It seeks to expose the fault lines, the ambiguities in key concepts and to reveal the contradictions inherent therein. The influence of discourse studies has been quite influential in critical development studies, for example with the emergence of the 'post-development' school. A fundamental insight was to consider the way the inter-connected power, knowledge and discourse of what we call 'development' has served to establish the dominance of the West over the Third World after the end of formal colonialism (see Cooper and Packard, 1997).

'Development' can, without much exaggeration, be seen as the dominant central organising concept of our era. It is a concept that emerged in the social sciences as a means to deal with the disorder created by progress towards modernity in Europe. The development of capitalism out of the old feudal order led to the twin processes of urbanisation and industrialisation which led to poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The source of disorder was seen to lie in laissez faire economics; essentially meaning the operation of a free market regardless of its impact on nature and society. For Auguste Comte, progress was 'the development of order under the influence of love' (cited in Cowen and Shenton, 1995: 34). Positivism was a system of thought developed by Comte and transmitted into modern science which guided developmental knowledge as an altruistic system: sociology would guide 'development' to establish 'order and progress', thus acting as a trustee for the development of society.

A quite distinct discursive construction of development and its Other, namely 'underdevelopment', emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War and the decline of classic colonialism. As the United States, the now dominant

global power, moved to consolidate its hegemony, it articulated a new notion of 'underdevelopment'. By declaring the post-colonial regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America as 'underdeveloped', the US set in motion a neo-colonial strategy to systematically change this 'Third World' and achieve progress towards the US model of development. This new development project offered a universal blueprint for national economic development under US tutelage. The modernisation project was replaced in the 1990s by the globalisation project, which turned away from national development towards a new global development model based on privatisation, the retreat of the state and the freeing up of Third World markets to the now dominant North Atlantic corporations and their local allies in the Third World.

As to the role of the NGOs in relation to the above processes, the self-image of the NGO - and NGO activists in particular - is very different from the role NGOs actually play in the contemporary political economy of globalisation. Thus Dóchas - the Irish umbrella body for development NGOs - states that 'our work is driven by the belief that our support for people and organisations in developing countries can bring about real and positive change' (Dóchas, 2019). We, as authors/activists, know many development workers, and have no doubt whatsoever that most are committed individuals. So how do we square the ostensible aims and objectives of NGOs and their staff with the verdict of Hardt and Negri in their influential alter-globalisation text *Empire* that humanitarian NGOs such as Amnesty, Oxfam and MSF 'are in effect (even if it runs counter to the intentions of the participants) some of the most powerful pacific weapons of the new world order - the charitable campaigns and the mendicant orders of Empire' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 36)? Their 'moral' intervention around development can actually be seen as a frontline force of imperial intervention; we need only think of the so-called 'humanitarian wars' of the 1990s (supported by many NGOs) or we could look back further to the role of the religious orders in the making of colonialism, an issue still very much of the present in the case of Ireland.

The NGOs in Latin America show an almost paradigmatic evolution from the radical rhetoric of the 1970s to fully compliant agents of neoliberal globalisation in the 1990s. In the 1970s, the NGOs in Latin America had

provided humanitarian support for the victims of the military dictatorships and consistently denounced their abuses of human rights. With democratisation in the 1980s and 1990s, the NGO's began to shift their critique towards the state in general and in defence of a somewhat nebulous 'civil society' (see Biekart, 1999). The NGOs shared much of the discourse of neoliberalism in regards to the supposed evils of the state, especially when it was a left-of-centre government in power as in the 2000s. There is little reference to this evolution in Ireland nor, for that matter, to the parallel debates and critiques in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa where the bulk of Irish Aid partner countries are located (see Amutabi, 2006; Shivji, 2007).

What happened then in the 1980s with the NGOs generally was a certain confluence between their anti-statist project and the hollowing-out of the state by the neoliberal technocrats. In part, the NGOs were facing the dilemmas of any social movement poised between the need to remain faithful to its objectives and the advantages of institutionalisation. It was also part of the price of success in so far as the NGOs had gained considerable influence and prestige which they now wanted to bring to bear in a more coherent way. But also, precisely at around this time, the state was beginning to retreat from some of its traditional roles in managing society, and the NGOs were presented with an opportunity (as well as the danger of co-option of course). The possible role of the NGOs in 'filling the gap' left by the retreating state was taken up explicitly by the World Bank in the 1990s. It was clear that, on the ground, development NGOs in particular were beginning to fulfil some of the functions abandoned by the state in the neoliberal 'revolution'. The World Bank became very concerned with the role of 'civil society' in holding together the atomised individuals (consumers) created by the neoliberal transformation. They began to see the need for structural adjustment 'with a human face' to avoid the worst effects of social disintegration and political instability. The NGOs became an integral element in this drive to create some degree of social cohesion and make up for the retreating state. From a progressive standpoint, the apparent co-option of the NGOs by neoliberalism was deeply disturbing, and for many activists in Latin America the NGOs were now seen to be openly 'in the service of imperialism' (see Petras, 1997). These conflicted experiences do not seem to have really impacted on the

NGO world-view in Ireland and mainstream development education programmes tend to, rather, reinforce the charitable approach (Simpson, 2017).

The contemporary NGO scene more broadly was also shaped by the ‘humanitarian wars’ that followed the breakup of the old Soviet Union in the 1990s: development and security became inseparably linked as did the relationship between many international NGOs and the armed forces of the imperial powers. In the new era of ‘biopolitics’ - derived from Foucault’s notion of biopower (Cisney and Morales, 2016) - and the extension of state power over both the physical and political bodies of a population - the NGOs moved into a crucial role in the new power paradigm of the neoliberal world order. From the liberal trusteeship of the past – that took rights and freedom as its reference points – there was a shift to an openly neoliberal movement under the guise of humanitarian emergencies. As Mark Duffield puts it:

“Emergency has provided a means of generating the world of peoples, ignoring existing laws, conventions or restraints; it has allowed the colonisation of new countries or increasing a presence where a foothold already existed” (Duffield, 2007: 48).

The US military-industrial complex that critics referred to in the 1950s, was being replaced by the military-NGO complex in the post-Cold War era. We note that Irish NGOs’ humanitarian budgets increased during the past 5–10 years, whilst work on human rights and participatory political empowerment processes seem to be shrinking or simply ‘mainstreamed’ into livelihoods and humanitarian work.

The political terrain that the NGOs see themselves working on today is that of ‘civil society’ (see Kleibl, 2017). It is assumed that there is a shared understanding of what civil society is and it is also taken for granted that it is ‘a good thing’. The romance with the concept of civil society had begun in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1980s under very different struggles for democratisation. By the time it was mainstreamed in the 1990s it had been co-opted into the new global governance architecture designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, increasingly dominating the African



continent (see DuBois, 1991) and across the global South. It entered development discourse as the underpinning for ‘governance’ which was arguably just another way of subjugating the Third World to the needs of imperialism. The virtues of ‘empowerment’ and ‘bottom up’ development were harnessed to assist the new free-market driven economic development strategy. We saw, in this period, a marked ‘NGOisation’ of the social movements that had played such a key role in the earlier democratisation struggles, not least in regards to the women’s movements in many regions of the global South (see Alvarez, 1999).

In the post-Cold War era the already ‘domesticated’ concept of civil society was scaled up to the global level and a new concept of ‘global civil society’ emerged (see Chandhoke, 2005; Munck, 2006). Never clearly defined, it was variously taken to mean the international NGOs, transnational advocacy networks and/or global social movements. It was and is seen to coordinate civil society organisations in different countries within a new ‘global’ framework. It helped provide legitimation for the NGOs operating on humanitarian, environmental and rights-based issues. But global civil society describes a very heterogeneous grouping – ranging from non-profits to businesses, radical peasant movements to well-established INGO’s, etc. – which is hardly captured adequately by the impressionistic definition that they were all, somehow, doing ‘globalisation from below’. It is unclear what implications the term of ‘global civil society’ might have in relation to the established inter-state system, and its ambiguous and contested politics leave it at best as a liberal aspiration.

There are further reasons why ‘global civil society’ cannot have a transformative dynamic and at best can only act as a palliative for the unsustainable economics of neoliberalism. Because it values conversation as an objective in its own right it can never reach a consensus to act as a collective agency as that would bring dialogue to an end. It disallows and cannot comprehend mass movements for social change, be they the labour movements or the Islamist movements. Furthermore, even a cursory analysis of ‘global civil society’ (and its INGO constituents) show how they fail utterly any tests around representation and accountability which are, of course, key to any transformative social movement. The issue of representation is particularly relevant when dealing with movements around migrants, market traders, bonded labour or indigenous

peoples given INGOs are most often based in the global North. There are no clear democratic mechanisms to ensure representivity, let alone accountability, which would entail a dismantling of the authoritarian bureaucratic structures of the INGOs themselves to start with.

The overarching paradigm most development NGOs operate within today is arguably the ‘human rights’ frame, also taken as a given and as an uncontested human good (see Bartholomey and Breakspear, 2004). Indeed, one of the defining features of the globalisation discourse was the global institutionalisation of human rights. They were to become the meta-narrative of the new era, part of the benign spread of Western modernity to the Third World under the aegis of the free market in capital, finance, land and people. There was very little reflexivity on the Western origins of human rights and their ambiguous impact. As Baxi reminds us ‘overall human rights discursively were and still remain, according to the narrative of origins, the patrimony of the West’ (Baxi, 2000:24). It legitimised the ‘humanitarian wars’ of the Balkans and more, giving cover for NGO integration with the imperial war machine. It generated and was based on, a comfortable liberal cosmopolitanism which, much like the concept of ‘global civil society’, had a direct parallel with the belief in the civilising mission of colonialism characteristic of an earlier period of ‘North-South’ relations called colonialism.

### **Irish exceptionalism?**

Against the above backdrop we now consider whether there is a form of Irish exceptionalism that in the main (apart from Goal) seemingly insulated Ireland both from the scandals that have recently surfaced and the internationally accepted critical understanding of the political economy of development. Irish NGOs seem to operate in a political and discursive world that sees them as exempt from the colonial aura surrounding other European nations. Furthermore, the critical debates about the role of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in facilitating the extension of the harmonious and dialogue-orientated Western civil society model to the rest of the world remains mainly un-reflected on, whilst the structural violence producing inequalities and fuelling conflict in the global South continue unremarked on. Apparently unaware of the debates in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, some Irish NGOs seem to quite complacently

bask in the progressive aura of Ireland's international image and aid policy in particular. There is a general sense we have found during interviews, that Irish NGOs in the main see themselves as faithfully implementing Catholic social thinking and influencing Irish Aid to maintain a progressive stance as compared to the openly neo-colonialist US or UK overseas aid models.

In brief, the Irish NGO world-view would very much see itself as part of the solution to development needs. There is not a particularly open attitude towards critical dialogue while the NGOs have 'a place at the table' as they see it, where they can talk with funders and policy makers on an equal footing (for an attempt to open just such a debate see McCloskey, 2012). So we now consider what justification there might be for such a Panglossian view of the political economy of development and the role of the NGO therein.

Many of the bigger Irish NGOs such as Trócaire, Concern and Goal frame their mission statements around principles of Catholic social teaching and/or the advancement of human rights. The implementation of their missions and poverty alleviation programmes are generally orientated by state policies and driven by results-based-management (RBM), a compulsory project management system adopted by Irish Aid and many other Western donors for grant receiving NGOs. In 2016, Irish Aid (2017) channelled over €165.6 million through civil society organisations, amounting to 23 percent of total overseas development aid (ODA). Whilst Irish Aid underlines that its partnerships with both international and local civil society organisations are integral to its work, it remains unclear if and how the above mentioned power relationships between international and national NGOs in a postcolonial context are understood and dealt with in practice. Or, put another way, how Irish Aid makes sure that it is local citizens and their respective organisational and community structures that are being strengthened and enabled to shape their own communities' development.

Irish Aid's largest civil society funding scheme is the Programme Grant, a competitive mechanism which provides multi-annual funding to Irish civil society organisations for ambitious programming aimed at long-term sustainable socio-economic change. In 2016, a new round of the Programme Grant was launched and a total of 13 organisations made successful applications (Irish Aid,

2017). The resulting grants range from €500,000 to €20 million per year for the 2017-2020 period. Whilst competition might be seen as a useful dynamic for economic growth, the move from previous institutional funding to specific programme funding based on NGOs' capacity to contribute to the achievement of Irish Aid's policy goals and the Sustainable Development Goals might have negative effects that might also go against the principle of solidarity.

Some Irish NGOs, that were previously known for their independent human rights based work, became competitors and became concerned about their own growth and this led to potential mergers with other NGOs. On 17 February 2017 an Irish Times article entitled 'Goal considered merger with Concern before Oxfam - Concern plan ended when Goal's board opted for a rival merger pitch from Oxfam Ireland', outlines the situation of the Irish NGOs which are now more in competition with one another rather than acting in solidarity (Irish Times, 2017). Or, to put it another way they were now acting as businesses would, not surprising given the large amounts of funding at stake. It seemed that Irish NGOs had to align their own development programmes and their respective focuses with Irish Aid priorities and they had to make sure to upgrade their results-based monitoring and evaluation capacities, leading to a shift in priority from politically empowering work to more technical and managerial work (see Khoo, 2018: 198-200). The price of 'being at the table' is that you have to follow the rules of the game. The NGOs know this of course but seldom openly acknowledge it, let alone allow an open debate amongst their supporters and the wider development community.

It is noticeable that over the last decade the amount of donor or institutional funding channelled through Irish NGOs has increased in relation to the overall NGO budget available for development and relief work. So, just by way of example, in 2017 Trócaire's unrestricted funds for development and relief work were half the amount derived from donor funds, that is €21 million compared to €40 million restricted funds (Trócaire, 2017). In the case of Goal, unrestricted funds made up only 3.4 percent of their overall income in 2017 (Goal, 2018). This means that by and large the majority of Irish development and relief NGO budgets are influenced and to a considerable extent controlled by institutional donors and their development priorities, Irish Aid being one of the

more influential donors especially for Trócaire and Concern. We get to a point where we have to consider if an NGO is not really a GONGO (government organised non-governmental organisation) in practice.

The proportional increase in institutional funding creates the danger that donor policies, including RBM, fuse with unique Irish NGO organisational histories, values and missions and hence, influence their human-rights based orientation and certainly the amount of advocacy work that challenges Irish government decisions or policies. This might not be a linear, or observable change, it rather happens in a hidden and discursive manner. However, the consequences are concrete; they impact on NGO practices and ways of working.

Critical scholars such as Ziai (2015) have sought to problematise the system of donor policy conditionality, highlighting the fact that it confronts local partners or beneficiaries with Western development concepts and related hierarchies of social problems. Social problems and their root causes are quite complex and context specific. Applying external problem definitions, and in many cases solutions, to other regions of the world carries increased potential to colonise non-Western life-worlds with external thoughts and ideas of development (see Kleibl and Munck, 2016). RBM arguably reinforces this tendency and Irish Aid as well as Irish NGOs have not sufficiently reflected on the power dynamics this entails and the consequences it produces.

Talking with Irish NGO workers we gathered that RBM was initially perceived as an interesting process, designed to produce better results for the poor. Now, however, it is more likely to be seen as a rather inflexible management process that incorporates local social development into a set of 'global organisational indicators' that are defined in Ireland. These 'global organisational indicators' then frame the concrete development programmes implemented in countries of the global South. This top-down development process has little to do with participatory democratic development from below, or empowerment understood as a process that changes the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalise women and other disadvantaged sectors (see Batiwala, 1994).

Results based management and the way it is applied through global indicators, tends to homogenise social and political problems affecting the lives of people living in the global South, as if they could be solved the same way everywhere, ignoring the historical, economic, social and political power relationships that created social inequality in an often violent way. Theories of change, which drive the objectives, expected outcomes and impact of RBM tend to reinforce Western hegemony and domination over the global South. Indeed, knowledge about 'development' presents itself as technical in the context of most results-based frameworks. Cooper and Packard remind us that 'development is fundamentally about changing how people conduct their lives, and the very claim to technical knowledge is in itself a political act' (Cooper and Packard, 1997:19).

The orientation of many Irish development initiatives hence appears fixed from the top, directed downwards through a results-based programme framework, to local partners and beneficiaries that implement or benefit from projects. This dynamic will not change naturally to a more desirable social justice orientated grassroots empowerment project that most Irish development NGOs in principle desire to carry forward. In reality, Irish NGOs, as most other INGOs, depend substantially on government funding which secures its employee's salaries and funding for partner's work. During an informal conversation with us, one Irish NGO worker explained the situation as follows: 'INGO funding exacerbates the North/South divide. If we would support our local partners in accessing funding from donors directly, we would do ourselves out of the job'. With this statement in mind, it appears clear that INGOs from their position in the aid chain tend to exclude local NGOs and social groups from accessing direct funding and hence decrease the potential for supporting locally grown initiatives for development. At the same time, Irish NGOs themselves are sharply restricted in terms of unrestricted funds and can only work within strict boundaries and procedures as defined by their institutional donors.

But what if, as most INGO's claim, their interventions do actually lead in practice to an improvement in the lives of their beneficiaries? What if the latter willingly accept the advice and control of the experts? Are our questions and deconstructions of the aid system then not unnecessarily critical in a context where good progress in the name of social development is being done?

But, what if all the upward looking accountability, monitoring and financing crowds out solidarity and reduces the power of decision-making of already marginalised citizens of the global South? We know some INGO staff on the ground who critically reflect on their part in upholding postcolonial North-South power relationships - trying to act as a 'protection zone' against directives articulated through potentially oppressive global organisational indicators from above - they have little space to turn the dynamics towards local development ownership. The situation is exacerbated through the positioning of INGO grant managers in overseas offices. The backdrop of this situation is that donors are increasingly channelling their development aid through local offices and embassies and INGOs, concerned about losing direct access to locally managed funds, further decentralise their fundraising and compliance staff as well.

An Irish NGO representative in an African country we talked to confirmed that within the overall budget of more than €4,000,000, only €20,000 represented free/voluntary funding which could be applied to development initiatives without the need to consider Western government donor priorities and RBM as its management tool. Hence, the great majority of programme funds applied from Irish NGOs in countries of the global South appear subordinated to Western donor priorities and related INGOs' 'global organisational indicators'. The question of whether Irish NGOs then remain part of civil society - clearly operating outside the government and private sector spheres - is at the very least highly debatable.

It is also no surprise that a more explicit business language is being applied as part of INGOs discourses and their practices; this includes for example the recruitment of business development advisors for international offices. Business advisors are the people making sure that INGO budgets grow or at least remain stable and that donor requirements are met. This situation further contributes to the difficult intermediary role INGOs play in an African context and raises questions about the relationship between INGOs and private sector actors and their joint impact on local development. What appears clear is that INGOs operating in the global South do not lead to the empowerment of local communities, a danger that Irish NGOs are clearly not immune to.

The dominant focus on donor fund raising and financial growth might ultimately affect INGOs partnership ethos and North/South solidarity, including their fight against gender based violence and corruption insofar as it subordinates their vision and mission to financial considerations. The subordination of solidarity to financial growth then makes the INGOs' mission equivalent to the mission of any private sector company where power abuses such as sexual harassment and financial wrong-doing happen all too frequently as part of the day-to day struggle to survive in the ever more demanding system of capitalist exploitation. From our analysis carried out so far, the opening statement of Shaista Aziz above, and her lack of surprise about the widespread sexual abuses recently uncovered within INGO structures make sense, and Irish NGOs are certainly no exception to this situation (see Power, 2018).

Standing back from the particulars of the research reported on above and reflecting on the troubled consciences of some of our interviewees we wonder if politics or the lack of politics is the underlying issue. Development, human rights and poverty reduction are somehow portrayed and felt as if in some way they are 'beyond' politics. As with faith- based organisations, and here the intimate connection between faith-based and development organisations in Ireland comes to the fore, politics is left outside in the mundane world. Yet as we have shown throughout, development is a highly political affair, as is something so seemingly innocuous and a 'good thing' as human rights. Until the Irish NGOs enter into a proper political conversation with other forces in civil society they will be dominated and constrained by the cosy pink glow of being on the side of good while refusing to engage with the contradictions of their mission. And, lest we forget, with the voices of the global South, the once colonised, enslaved and still exploited by the global structures of capitalism for whom the NGOs now form an integral part of soft power and governance modalities. Ireland is not in an exceptional position in this regard due to being a postcolonial country itself we would argue.

## **Discussion**

We began by posing some current, very troubling, issues emerging with leading, even paradigmatic, development NGO's. We then proposed a fairly basic deconstruction of the terms being deployed - the terms 'development' and 'NGO'



in particular - and those guiding much NGO and World Bank understanding of the world, namely 'civil society' and 'human rights'. This led us to a discussion of Irish exceptionalism, as in whether Ireland is in some fundamental way an exception to the broader international debate around development and NGO's. In terms of opening up a discussion we need to ask whether, in regards to development and NGOs, Ireland is different. Our own response will be both in the affirmative and the negative. Then, instead of seeking answers to all the difficult questions posed we are proposing a new approach to the study of NGOs - a cultural political economy - which we hope can establish a critically engaged research agenda.

Ireland is, indeed, different in terms of its engagement with development and the history of its NGOs. Much is made in Irish 'development work' that it is not a country with a colonial past, quite the contrary. That, supposedly, places it on a different political and moral plane compared to, say, British, French or Belgian, development agencies. Yet recent historiography of Ireland and the British Empire (see Kenny, 2004) shows that Irish participation in empire was not a paradox but a major feature that would be expected in terms of the nature of the link with Britain. Nationalist historiography would prefer to airbrush out this aspect of Ireland's subordination/colonial role but the evidence is steadily emerging, for example in relation to slavery. Irish participation in colonialism was consistent even if unrecorded by and large. The notion that 'Ireland is a Third World country' (Caherty, 1992) became common currency in the 1980s and is also equally off the mark. Today there is simply no way the European paragon of a 'market-friendly', tax evading, US subservient state can be seen as anything other than a neo-colonial state in relation to the Third World, complacent nationalist discourses notwithstanding.

Ireland is also 'different' in terms of the very large role played by the Catholic Church and human rights discourses. Yet this difference is largely taken for granted and never theorised or problematised. This contrasts, for example, with the vast literature in Latin America on the growing influence of the Protestant churches in civil society (see Stoll, 1991) which we understand as a political phenomenon deserving critical analysis. Even in relation to the political role of Argentina's Jesuit leader Jorge Bergoglio and his disputed human rights record

under the dictatorship (see Chossudovsky, 2013), in Ireland, across the spectrum, there is a preference for the sanitised or sanctified version of Pope Francis with not a scintilla of critical thinking evident or even awareness of the debate in Argentina around him. Also on the question of sexual abuse it is assumed - as when the Oxfam scandal broke - that Ireland is immune to such problems. In a society where clerical sexual abuse (and its cover up) has been so prominent it could be seen as over confident to say the least (see, e.g Minister of Justice and Equality, 2009). In brief, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Ireland simply cannot be immune to any of the political issues we have raised about development NGOs, from their close relationship with governments and the private sector to their neo-colonial relationship with the Third World.

What we propose, in conclusion, is not a polemic, however, but a carefully crafted and openly debated research project involving the participation and engagement of the Irish NGO sector and, crucially, the critical development education sector. We believe that one thing is 'being at the table' with funders, another is engaging with one's own supporters, including critical ones. What the Oxfam/Goal scandals signal is an urgent need for honest self-reflection on where the Irish NGOs need to go now to fulfil their original missions. We can either listen to international experience, for example in Latin America, learn from it and change or bury our heads in the sand and hope the storm will pass. Business as usual is not an option as inevitably the status quo will prevail.

We are proposing, for our part, to move beyond the current impasse an action oriented analytical framework that seeks to synthesise the political economy approach and the critical analysis of discourse (see Sum and Jessop, 2012). While much of the critical literature on NGOs deploys a political economy approach - their relationship to global neoliberalism for example - less attention is paid to the 'meaning making' we can discern through a semiotic analysis. A cultural political economy appraisal is well suited to the study of how policy discourse and political imaginaries are constructed. It would help us analyse some of the issues raised above - from sexual abuse to the Catholic Weltanschauung - by looking afresh at the way in which policy-makers, NGO managers and academics construct meaning ('soft power') around development and the role of the NGO sector in Ireland.

In terms of how such an open enquiry might be organised we would argue that development educators have a key role to play in this process, not least given a shared interest and parallel concerns to our own. They could help us interrogate the issues raised above and participate actively in the proposed action research initiative. Furthermore, development education methodologies could augment and enhance the research by making it more participative and robust. We need to bear in mind, that since the 1990s the big INGOs have reduced their support for development education which has, in turn, weakened their capacity for public education and critical inquiry on global issues. This weakening internal and external engagement with global education practice is, perhaps, reflective of a growing corporatisation, and what Bryan (2011) describes as a ‘declawing of development education’, within NGOs. This may be the result of senior management positions being taken by executives from the private sector with a more tenuous relationship with development education values and practices. In a related argument Simpson (2017) points out that NGO fundraising activities in schools often reinforce the ‘Band Aid’ – donor-driven approach - to development, which can stereotype the global South and strengthen the ‘Othering’ of people in the South as charity cases, devoid of agency. In short, development education is in danger of falling in with neoliberal agendas (Selby and Kagawa, 2011) and thus this exercise could be useful to critically interrogate its own politics.

We need to ask if development NGOs are applying double standards when it comes to implementing their human resource policies, including gender and protection policies, in the global South and the North? Is their lack of accountability linked to the postcolonial continuation of ‘othering’, which facilitates these double standards based on categorisation and differentiation, followed by subordination of the ‘other’? Might this in turn be linked to INGOs’ educational programmes creating an environment where all poor men in the global South are categorised as patriarchal and women as disempowered and consequently sub-ordinated? In which case people from the global South are generally represented as uneducated and malnourished, basically, in need of ‘our’ help? Development education practice in INGOs can sometimes shift from a social justice orientated approach to a charitable approach which in turn carries the potential to enhance the myth of the North as the ‘good guys’ on a civilising mission and the South in need of ‘saving’.

What has been the impact on development education of the reduction in official development aid since the 2008/09 financial crises and the consequent increase of INGOs efforts to increase direct fundraising? Is it a coincidence that these large, well-funded, well-connected and still widely respected organisations make some of their Northern staff believe they stand somehow ‘above’ their Southern colleagues, partners or target groups? Following Selby and Kagawa (2011) on INGOs engaged in development education, we need to ask ourselves: what values matter most to us, and why? What values, competencies and dispositions do we think will best realise the future, personal through global, that we are working for? Is anything we are doing or saying - or anything we are not doing or saying - selling out our worldview for short-term influence? If so, what are the attendant dangers and likely consequences? What should we do so as to better achieve a way forward congruent with our original values? To not take up this challenge means to condone a status quo that will lead, inevitably, to more Oxfams and Goals.

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# ASSESSING MICROFINANCE AS A MEANS OF SOCIOECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN IN JORDAN

ERIN WELSH

**Abstract:** This article explores the growth of the microfinance industry in Jordan and evaluates its success as an instrument of women's empowerment. It examines the criteria for empowerment following a neoliberal development model, and then employs feminist critiques of microfinance in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia to scrutinise this standard. Finally, it investigates how development education (DE) might re-appropriate *empowerment* into a bottom-up form of consciousness-raising that confronts – rather than abets – systems which exploit vulnerable women.

**Key words:** Microfinance; Jordan; Women's Empowerment; Development Education.

## Introduction

Following its emergence in Bangladesh in the 1970s, microfinance has been promoted by international development organisations such as the World Bank and United Nations as a tactic of poverty mitigation, especially for women (Dymski, 2008: 140; World Bank, 2004: 157). Since 2013, the World Bank (in cooperation with the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the country's Central Bank) has financed \$120 million in loans to micro, small and medium enterprises in Jordan; according to its most recent Implementation Status & Results Report, 87 percent of this project's beneficiaries have been women (World Bank, 2017). Partnered with private non-profit organisations like Jordan's Microfund For Women and Tamweelcom, the World Bank initiative claims to empower vulnerable women economically and socially by offering them an avenue to entrepreneurship (Microfund For Women, 2019; MENA Report, 2018).

In practice, the degree to which microfinance provisions socioeconomically empower women in Jordan is a contested issue. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) in Jordan have been championed by members of the

international development community for their operational success as banking enterprises; they boast high repayment rates, steadily increasing funding provisions, and expanding clientele outreach, primarily to women (Abdelkader & Mansouri, 2019: 56-7; Žiaková & Verner, 2015: 179; Al-Azzam, Hill, & Sarangi, 2012: 412-4; Isaia, 2005: 445-8). Assuming a neoliberal modernisation development model - one which prioritises ingress to the 'free market' as tantamount to an individual's social and political agency (De Soto, 2000: 240; Fukuyama, 1989: 4) - microfinance empowers female clients in Jordan by facilitating access to credit and promoting entrepreneurship; financial control over micro-businesses consequently strengthens women's authority within their households and communities (Ghosh & Neogi, 2017: 183-9; Gomez, 2013: 37; Remenyi, 2004: 40).

Critics of this development scheme contend that microfinance substitutes precarious vocation in the 'informal sector' for explicit unemployment, thereby refusing the benefits characteristic of formal wage-labour jobs, such as union membership, to 'self-employed' borrowers and fracturing class consciousness for subjects under Jordan's capitalist monarchical regime (Sukarieh, 2016: 1220-2; Achcar, 2013: 35; Abu-Rish, 2012: 246; Bateman, 2010: 43; King, 2003: 133-6). Feminist interrogations of microfinance's individualist 'empowerment' objective note its failure to challenge structural impediments to gender equity or stimulate collective movements toward social and political justice (Ward, 2014; Sholkamy, 2010: 257-8; Calvès, 2009: 747), and evidence MFIs' propensity to reproduce systems of subordination which particularly harm vulnerable women (Karim, 2011: 197-8; Manji, 2006: 124-6).

These competing evaluations reveal a fundamental discrepancy in the meaning of 'empowerment'. While the term once indicated a component of women's collective action against oppressive structures, neoliberal institutions have incorporated this lexicon into their mission statements, redefining empowerment as an individualist ambition. These interpretations are fundamentally incompatible; the former encourages grassroots organising to overturn systems of subordination while the latter stresses cooperation with such systems - especially capitalism - to create an opportunity for independent financial sustainability.

## **The ascendance of microfinance and its critics**

Originally termed *microcredit* by its architect, economist Muhammad Yunus, microfinance describes small loans intended to assist low-income borrowers with entrepreneurial activities (Dymski, 2008: 140). Yunus established the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983 as a 'bank for the poor,' offering low-interest loans to the Chittagong district's rural villagers to liberate them from avaricious moneylenders and permanent insolvency (Yunus & Jolis, 1997/2007). Soon after, global financial institutions like the World Bank heralded microfinance as a propitious strategy of poverty alleviation (Rankin, 2001: 18-9; Robinson, 2001: 19-22). At the Middle East and Africa Microcredit Summit Meeting held in Amman, Jordan in 2004, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan praised microfinance as a 'one of the success stories of the past decade... [that] has contributed to the empowerment of women and to better results in education, nutrition, and health' (Annan, 2004).

Despite the microfinance model's popularity among neoliberal financial forums, economists, policy analysts, and journalists have doubted its efficacy as a sustainable poverty-reduction tool. Senior fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Global Development David Roodman summarises: 'Dozens of studies have attempted to measure average effects of microfinance... the average impact of microcredit on poverty is about zero' (Roodman, 2012: 164). Finance ethicist Lesley Sherratt notes that randomised controlled trials have not found microfinance practises to have positive long-term effects on household income, health, or education (Sherratt, 2016: 28-34). Development economists Milford Bateman and Ha-Joon Chang further charge that microfinance programmes have repeatedly ensnared struggling households and communities in a 'poverty trap' by charging high interest rates for loans with insufficient material benefits (Bateman & Chang, 2010: 30; Bunting, 2011). Anthropologist Jason Hickel similarly asserts that high-interest micro-loans often compound into unsustainable debt (Hickel, 2015).

In other circumstances, MFIs and their operative members directly engage in exploitative ventures: environmental reporter Abrahm Lustgarten writes that Singaporean palm oil company Bumitama gained access to MFI records in Kotawaringin, Indonesia, and 'used the microfinance group as a kind of front to justify putting up land owned by residents as collateral for a \$26 million bank

loan, effectively mortgaging it to the industry's financial backers' without the knowledge or consent of the poor villagers whose lands are now controlled and polluted by Bumitama (Lustgarten, 2018).

This research reveals a significant gap between Kofi Annan's laudations of microfinance as a 'success story,' and controlled impact studies and investigative reporting which determine MFI practises to be ineffective at best and predatory at worst. Crucially, there is little evidence to suggest microfinance empowers vulnerable people by materially transforming their lives. Undeterred by these pessimistic appraisals, however, MFIs in Jordan continue to lean on a neoliberal definition of 'empowerment' which prioritises 'financial inclusion' over measurable poverty reduction.

### **The growth of microfinance in Jordan**

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's political and macroeconomic stability combined with its government's willingness to adhere to the neoliberal open-market policies encouraged by international financial agencies and foreign investors has positioned the small country as the region's premier development aid beneficiary (Abdelkader & Mansouri, 2019: 56; UNDP, 2015: 151-3; Abugattas-Majluf, 2012: 231-3; El-Anis, 2011: 130-1; Isaia, 2005: 442-8; Hassan & Al-Saci, 2004: 6). Jordan earns a high score on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index - outperforming most Arab states, especially those outside the Gulf Cooperation Council - due to its high literacy rate and life expectancy, but its population faces inequalities between the country's urban capital of Amman and its rural governorates, and between men and women (USAID, 2016: 25-7; UNDP, 2015: 15). Though the 2011 'Arab Spring' witnessed small protests in Jordan demanding political and economic reforms and an influx of refugees from Syria, the country's authoritarian monarchy-maintained power, reaffirming its security in an area afflicted with conflict and leveraging this status as justification for requesting large sums of international aid (Al-Khalidi, 2019; Kelberer, 2017: 148-50; Abu-Rish, 2012: 237). These factors have warranted a low risk-rating in the World Bank's assessment for its ongoing \$120 million microenterprise development project in the Hashemite Kingdom (World Bank, 2017: 1-5).

Following Muhammad Yunus's prototype, microfinance institutions (MFIs) worldwide deliberately target women in their clientele outreach, stressing entrepreneurship as a vehicle of women's empowerment (Hulme & Arun, 2009: 1; Annan, 2004; Robinson, 2001: xxxv; Hughes & Awimbo, 2000: 75; Yunus & Jolis, 1997/2007) and pointing to data that indicates women are more likely than men to repay micro-loans (D'Espallier, Guérin, & Mersland, 2011: 758; Bateman, 2010: 9). MFIs in Jordan adhere to this model; according to the 2018 first quarter report by the Sanabel Microfinance Network of Arab Countries, an estimated 65 percent of Jordan's microfinance clients are women, outpacing the regional average of 55 percent and surpassing all other countries except Sudan (75 percent) and Egypt (70 percent) (Sanabel, 2018: 3). Tanmeyah, the Jordan Microfinance Network, places women's involvement for the same quarter at 72 percent (Tanmeyah, 2018: 12). The World Bank claims that 87 percent of its Jordanian microfinance development project beneficiaries are women (World Bank, 2017: 2), but its data should be examined with scepticism; the same 2017 World Bank report claims to extend credit to four distinct MFIs, but one of these organisations (Middle East Microfinance Company) was reincorporated into another named MFI (Vitas Jordan) in 2013 (Mustafa, 2014). This oversight calls into question the validity of the World Bank's quantitative data and declarations of the programme's success.

### **Women's empowerment under the neoliberal modernisation development model**

Researchers, policy-makers, and MFI bureaucrats who promote microfinance as a means of sustainable development which empowers women defend their position with neoliberal suppositions: microfinance projects empower vulnerable women by providing an entry point to the market, and the success of microfinance projects can be quantitatively measured by the viability of the MFIs involved. The 'World Bank for the Poor', FINCA International, encapsulates these ideas on its website:

"Our formula to empower these women is simple: with your support, we give a small loan to a hardworking woman to start or expand her small business. She uses the profits from her business to fulfil one of her modest dreams. As her business succeeds and she pays the loan

back to FINCA, those funds go back to work to making another woman's dream come true" (2017).

Assuming this paradigm, microfinance in Jordan effectively empowers vulnerable women by targeting them for microfinance loans, thereby fulfilling the neoliberal aspiration of 'helping the poor to help themselves' by providing the motivated among them a stimulus for entrepreneurship (Microfund For Women, 2019; Žiaková & Verner, 2015: 179; Isaia, 2005: 445-8). High repayment rates which support the sustenance and expansion of MFIs confirm this proficiency (Abdelkader & Mansouri, 2019: 56-7; Al-Azzam, Hill, & Sarangi, 2012: 412-4).

Guardians of neoliberal development synonymise participation in the 'free market' capitalist system - banking, entrepreneurship, and private property ownership - with empowerment. American political economist Francis Fukuyama famously asserts that freedom in the neoliberal economic sense naturally strengthens 'Western liberal democracy', the ultimate sociocultural target (Fukuyama, 1989: 3). Likewise, Peruvian development economist Hernando De Soto proclaims, 'Legal property empowers individuals in any culture' (De Soto, 2000: 240). Regarding the Arab world, De Soto argues that the 2010-11 uprisings which began in Tunisia stemmed from resistance to governmental impediment to liberal projects like microfinance rather than failings endemic to neoliberalism (De Soto, 2011).

In this scenario, microfinance is key to women's liberation as 'millions of poor people, and especially poor women, have been given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own welfare, their own livelihoods, and their own future' (Remenyi, 2004: 40). Microenterprise ownership develops a woman's self-confidence within her household (Ghosh & Neogi, 2017: 183-4) which sequentially increases her social participation (Gomez, 2013: 30). Women in Jordan therefore command individual empowerment and greater civic inclusion in a country moving toward liberal democracy thanks to Jordan's extensive women-oriented microfinance networks.

In their longitudinal qualitative study of Palestinian refugee women in Jordan engaged in home-based 'entrepreneurship' in the form of traditional embroidery, researchers Haya Al-Dajani and Susan Marlow attempt to create a

framework which posits a relationship between individualist ‘entrepreneurial empowerment’, motivation, and community development. Aiming to reconcile the gap between liberal individualism and socioeconomic advancement, the authors define *empowerment* as a process whereby an individual’s increased agency enables her to affect change within her community (2013: 506). Al-Dajani and Marlow note the possible transformational force of microfinance initiatives in this process, suggesting:

“Through positive role modelling, business support, peer mentoring and micro-financing, home-based women entrepreneurs may become sufficiently empowered to establish their own formalised and legally recognised enterprises” (2013: 516).

By this measurement, social change does not necessarily occur as a direct result of economic establishment but may be achieved when an individually empowered woman invests resources gained from her microenterprise into collective projects. However, of the forty-three embroiderers Al-Dajani and Marlow interviewed over a ten-year period, ‘None of the participants had achieved economic establishment as formalised and legally recognised enterprises beyond the boundaries of the home and immediate community’ (2013: 516).

Al-Dajani and Marlow conclude that women’s participation in home-based informal labour helps to alleviate material poverty by increasing household income, promotes women’s financial independence within their families, and remains relatively sustainable even during periods of political and economic turmoil; all outcomes which the researchers argue empower individual women (2013: 511-15). Though their data does not indicate whether any women in their sample received microfinance loans, these results support claims that microfinance programmes - by supporting entrepreneurship and entry into the market - empower vulnerable women in Jordan.

### **Challenging the neoliberal development model and its gains for women**

Critics of the neoliberal development model identify practical and theoretical deficits in its women’s empowerment agenda. Surface-level analysis of governmental systems in the Middle East refutes Fukuyama and De Soto’s assertion that liberal economic policies usher in Western-style democracy. Among

Arab countries, the conservative Heritage Foundation ranks the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, Morocco, Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia as ‘mostly’ or ‘moderately’ economically free by liberal measures such as ‘property rights’ and ‘open markets’ (Heritage Foundation, 2019), but the Democracy Index developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit categorises all of these except Morocco as ‘authoritarian’ regimes (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). Likewise, Democracy Index rates Tunisia as the most democratic among the Arab states (as a ‘flawed democracy’) while the Heritage Foundation considers Tunisia’s economy ‘mostly unfree’. This further indicates that there is no direct causal link, or even correlation, between liberal economic policies and democracy.

In Jordan, women hold few seats in the country’s impotent parliament (Apolitical, 2017) and the country’s statutes expressly permit marital rape, exempt rapists from punishment through marriage or payment, and restrict prison sentences for so-called ‘honour crimes’ (Equality Now, 2017: 6). Accordingly, the largest left-wing grassroots women’s organisation in Jordan, the Jordanian Women’s Union, does not embrace microfinance as a vehicle for empowerment, but instead advocates for more radical systemic change through collective action (Jordanian Women’s Union, 2019; Larzillière, 2016: 78).

Political economists who concentrate on the Middle East and North Africa have emphasised how neoliberal reforms have strengthened dictatorships in the region, undermined proletarian organisations, and contributed to poverty and economic precarity. Almost a decade prior to the 2010 Tunisian uprising, Stephen J. King predicted that neoliberal structural adjustment programmes which ‘empower the winners’ at the expense of the country’s poorest might ‘provoke workers to greater resistance’ (King, 2003: 140). In 2011, demonstrators in Jordan protested neoliberal governmental policies which have abetted poverty, unemployment, rising prices, and low purchasing power (Abu-Rish, 2012: 245-6).

Microfinance as a development strategy ignores these structural maladies and instead reconstitutes Jordanians as neoliberal subjects at the mercy of foreign NGOs and the capitalist regime (Sukarieh, 2016: 1220-2). Moreover, neoliberal development programmes distract from systemic economic failures by ‘disguising what is in fact unemployment as undeclared “employment”, “self-employment”



or even a “microenterprise” (Achcar, 2013: 35). In Jordan, the precarity of informal work stretches beyond the risks of taking out a loan and starting a business. More than 60 percent of the labour force cannot afford to contribute to social security, and most of these workers are employed by firms with fewer than five members (Gatti, Angel-Urdinola, Silva, & Bodor, 2014: 9-14). As microfinance critic Milford Bateman summarises, ‘Neoliberal social policy models are very clearly contingent upon the expansion of self-employment and microenterprises in order to facilitate the “flexibilization” and disempowerment of the labour force. This is especially the case with regard to low-skilled and unskilled women’ (Bateman, 2010: 43). While the immediate liquidity provided by microfinance loans might help women in the short-term, it does not challenge patriarchy or institutions which exclude women from formal employment and its benefits (Sholkamy, 2010: 257-8).

Contrasted with rosy depictions of microfinance as a ‘simple formula’ for women’s prosperity, these negative appraisals reveal a significant theoretical discrepancy in the ‘empowerment’ slogan: while neoliberal bodies like the World Bank define *empowerment* as an individual’s license to participate in the market - and perhaps her feeling of personal responsibility that occurs by doing so - Marxist philosophers contend that incorporation into an oppressive economic system is fundamentally *disempowering*. Paulo Freire termed this insidious absorption ‘dominated consciousness’; it demands women gratefully comply with unjust capitalist structures by camouflaging the potential for collective action in the rhetoric of individual agency (Freire, 2014 [1970]). Anne-Emmanuèle Calvès expands upon how neoliberal development institutions have integrated the language of ‘women’s empowerment’ into their literature to subvert the term’s formerly radical meaning: ‘It has come to assimilate power with individual and economic decision-making, has de-politicised collective power into something seemingly harmonious, and has been employed to legitimise existing top-down policies and programmes’ (2009: 747). As Mayssoun Sukarieh notes in her ethnographic research of microfinance-based international development projects in Jordan, participants must undergo a programme of neoliberal indoctrination in the form of ‘entrepreneurial training’ to receive microcredit loans; in these classes, instructors employed by MFIs urge borrowers to reject community solidarity and embrace cutthroat individualism (2016: 1201-2). Thus, the women-

focused microfinance model and its parallel pedagogy outsource failures of the state and international finance corporations to vulnerable women in Jordan by holding the independent businesswoman accountable for her household's well-being.

Though Jordanian MFIs report relatively high repayment rates and operational sustainability, microfinance sceptics doubt whether this measurement accurately indicates borrowers' financial success or social empowerment. Estee Ward writes for *The Guardian*:

“Among a focus group of 15 women [in Jordan] who borrowed money to start a business, high interest rates forced more than half to use savings for payments and spend the initial loan on immediate needs, such as utilities and healthcare, rather than on what it was intended for. Many women experienced shame for their apparent failure, and deferred loan management to their husbands” (Ward, 2014).

This suggests microfinance loans do not liberate women in Jordan from gendered economic oppression; rather, they reinforce the sexist notion that women's labour is informal, flexible and non-contractable, especially in the domestic sphere (Manji, 2006: 125).

In India, Srilatha Batliwala and Deepa Dhanraj found that microfinance programmes without attention to the prevailing patriarchal system increased men's hostility toward working women and forced loan recipients to prioritise repayment over improving their own welfare (Batliwala & Dhanraj, 2007: 24). In her survey of microfinance in Bangladesh, Lamia Karim concludes that a system of social pressure centred on women's 'honour and shame' acts as collateral for microfinance loans, as women who fail to repay are considered failures by their husbands and communities (Karim, 2011: 197-8). Researchers Al-Azzam, Hill, and Sarangi reached similar findings in their study of repayment performance in Jordan: individuals who faced higher group pressure were more likely to repay loans (Al-Azzam, Hill, & Sarangi, 2012: 414). These inquiries contradict MFIs' assumption that high repayment rates prove clients' businesses have succeeded. Furthermore, the studies pessimistically insinuate that

microfinance does not subvert oppressive systems of power, but instrumentalises patriarchy to ensure women's compliance.

### **Reconciling women's empowerment in Jordan**

The rhetorical discrepancy between the individualist interpretation of *empowerment* and its roots in critical theory and activism gives rise to a problem in measuring the success of microfinance in Jordan. The neoliberal position likens admittance into the marketplace to empowerment whereas the radical viewpoint conceptualises empowerment as one component of collective liberation grounded in identifying and challenging oppressive systems. Without addressing these contradictions, 'women's empowerment', though an almost universally uncontested goal for development initiatives, is a hollow exercise in semantics.

In their assessment of Palestinian women's home-based embroidery enterprises in Jordan, researchers Al-Dajani and Marlow attempt to bridge the gap between these philosophies by suggesting that entrepreneurship encourages women to engage in Freirean 'conscientisation,' or upending dominated consciousness by elucidating and combating societal oppression (2013: 512). Despite these theoretical concessions, however, Al-Dajani and Marlow fail to explain how women's entrepreneurship in Jordan interrupts the dominant structures of oppression mentioned in their analysis; patriarchy and forced displacement. Their research determines:

“Whilst home-based enterprise did facilitate the empowerment process such that women were able to improve personal and communal welfare, act as role models and attribute higher status and value to their individual subject position, it did not represent a fundamental challenge to patriarchal ordering” (2013: 518).

Additionally, Al-Dajani and Marlow recognise their research participants' unique vulnerability as Palestinian refugees in Jordan but do not address how embroidery work challenges this subjectivity beyond providing 'a legitimate outlet for expressing, sharing and celebrating their heritage, identity and political power through traditional craft' (2013: 517). Indeed, undertaking 'traditional' art forms and heritage practises such as embroidery may reaffirm Palestinian national identity (Kawar & Nasir, 1980), but these forms of cultural

resistance can exist independently from the circumstances of commodification and mass production described in Al-Dajani and Marlow's research. Al-Dajani and Marlow do not acknowledge extant Palestinian political consciousness which identifies Zionist imperialism as the root of Palestinian exile (Peteet, 1991: 68), and hence do not explore how women's 'empowered entrepreneurship' might challenge this system of domination.

In their concluding remarks, Al-Dajani and Marlow contend that micro-entrepreneurship should not serve as a single solution to widespread social problems or absolve the state from its responsibility toward vulnerable groups. Instead, their study examines 'how marginalised women positioned within a context which denies them the spectrum of rights afforded to enfranchised human subjects can use the options available, such as entrepreneuring, to enhance their empowerment' (2013: 519). By creating an analytical vacuum which deliberately ignores the systemically *disempowering* character of capitalism and instead endorses piecemeal material gains, Al-Dajani and Marlow belie the crux of Freire's conscientisation pedagogy altogether. Freire argues: 'There can be no conscientisation of the people without a radical denunciation of dehumanising structures, accompanied by the proclamation of a new reality to be created by men' (Freire, 2000: 59). Strategies which seek to work within oppressive systems rather than transform them are therefore antithetical to Freirean conscientisation.

Likewise, the 'craft-based' small-scale informal employment labelled by Al-Dajani and Marlow as 'entrepreneurship' is emblematic of exploitation through subcontracting which deprives women of formal employment benefits and the opportunity to unionise (Bateman, 2010: 43; Schild, 2007). As feminist scholar Sheila Rowbotham notes in *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*: 'The organization of production within capitalism creates a separate and segmented vision of life which continually restricts consciousness of alternatives' (1973/2015). MFIs have co-opted vocabulary grounded in women's liberation such as 'empowerment' and 'conscientisation' to appeal to feminist development initiatives and international donors, but they cannot meaningfully challenge systems of subordination while reinforcing dominated consciousness through capitalism, as these positions are irreconcilable. Though increased household financial liquidity through microfinance and informal employment may be advantageous to Jordan's poorest women, the attached conditions of

neoliberalism preclude collective opposition to the country's hierarchical structures which methodically subjugate women and refugees.

### **Reclaiming empowerment with development education**

Development education (DE) programmes which seek to facilitate durable women's empowerment must critique strategies like neoliberal microfinance which hinder grassroots organising, class consciousness, and oppositional politics. While many development enterprises speak the language of women's liberation, they demand compliance with oppressive systems in exchange for financial assistance. DE discourses must resist the pervasive problem of rhetorical manipulation to combat ineffectual or detrimental policies.

Empowerment-speak is not merely in-vogue among development circles; it has become an incontrovertible way to frame even the most dubious interactions in a positive light. In April 2009, the United States Army tweeted, 'Soldiers sort half a million school books to empower Iraqi children' (U.S. Army, 2009). That same month *The Telegraph* (2009) reported that at least 39 per cent of Iraqi civilians killed in U.S. air strikes during the Iraq War were children. In December 2017, the official Twitter account for the State of Israel recognised the international day for persons with disabilities, noting that Israel 'will continue to empower people with disabilities around the world' (Israel, 2017). Weeks later, Israeli armed forces shot and killed Palestinian double-amputee Abu Thuraya at a protest in Gaza; Thuraya had lost both his legs in an Israeli airstrike almost a decade prior (Beaumont, 2017).

This signals that critical reflection in DE is crucial. There is space in DE to challenge the assumptions and supporting vocabulary behind programmes like microfinance, but such examination must include probing the fashionable tenets of development; jargon like 'empowerment' cannot be taken for granted, especially as it conveys multiple antithetical meanings. Students of DE must possess awareness of their own subjectivities and their potential to either uphold or dispute oppressive systems. This employs conscientisation in the Freirean sense: participants in DE must analyse existing tyrannical frameworks in development and dissect language which upholds these regimes.

Scholars and activists at the forefront of development and DE have engaged these criticisms to challenge top-down development schemes. Academics such as Bateman and Chang (2010), Hickel (2015), Sukarieh (2016), Sholkami (2010), Manji (2006), and Karim (2011) have confronted microfinance lending as a sustainable development model and have found that—contrary to endorsements from neoliberal institutions like USAID and the World Bank—microfinance modalities *disempower* loan recipients as potential political actors by obscuring the apparatuses accountable for systemic poverty. As sociologist Audrey Bryan (2011) notes, DE has been ‘declawed’ – deprived of its formerly radical backbone and lacking reflexive analysis. Reorienting DE to facilitate conscientisation among practitioners and programme beneficiaries alike thus necessitates interrogation of the supposed depoliticisation of development strategies (which itself neutralises class-based activism to the favour of powerful organisations and regimes) and a radical outlook toward women’s struggle for liberation which strictly prioritises comprehensive economic justice over neoliberal ideology and profit.

Should *empowerment* be severed from the lexicon of DE or salvaged and reconstructed to connote grassroots consciousness-raising and radical politics? It may serve no use other than to obscure the influence of questionable projects like microfinance on vulnerable communities. Or, perhaps the malleability of language generates an opportunity to re-appropriate *empowerment* into an expression of conscious resistance. This would mandate an overhaul of the neoliberal development glossary, and specifically in the case of Jordan, an analysis of hierarchies and conditions which routinely defraud vulnerable people in the country of their power: neoliberalism, austerity, patriarchy, Zionism in Palestine, and wars in Syria and Iraq are among these systems.

Development educators suggest approaches which scrutinise the structural underpinnings of poverty and economic inequality – namely, neoliberalism, austerity, and economic imperialism. Both John Hilary (2013) and Stephen McCloskey (2011) implore NGOs to resist the depoliticization of development and protest capitalism as a barrier to social progress. Indeed, poverty – and especially gendered poverty – is inevitably political, and sustainable solutions must therefore be embedded in political movements seeking to radically reshape the social order. To advance the status of women, as Patricia Muñoz

Cabrera writes in her analysis of eight Latin American case studies focused on creating alternative development models to the orthodox neoliberal strategies, grassroots projects cannot simply aim to include individuals in the marketplace; programmes must take into account community members' 'economic, social, cultural, sexual and reproductive rights' (Muñoz Cabrera, 2012). A more holistic approach offers development programme educators and administrators to address poverty's comorbidities such as gender inequality, dangerous and exploitative working conditions, lack of access to education and healthcare, violent conflict, and military and corporate exhaustion of environmental resources.

With the appropriate considerations, DE can be a politically effectual tool for transforming ideological conceptions which uphold systemic gendered poverty and organising a more equitable future. The most important of these, I propose, is the adoptions of a pedagogical framework corresponding to Freire's process of conscientisation: DE must habitually investigate the assumptions underlying development models and the manners by which they are often imposed onto subjugated populations. Educators should routinely reflect on their own political philosophies and epistemologies with distinct regard to the typically asymmetrical distribution of power between teachers and students, development organisations and programme beneficiaries, and international political bodies and vulnerable communities.

Imperatively, and especially in circumstances where the pupils of DE come from marginalised backgrounds, DE should take the form of cooperative discussion rather than top-down discourse. This marks a sharp departure from the microfinance discipline in Jordan, which lectures loan recipients on capitalist dogmata and erroneously applies terms like 'women's empowerment' to camouflage the power disparity between financial institutions and low-income borrowers. Rather than mandating obedience to any political ideology, DE should instigate critical examination of these values and offer a venue for individuals to partake in the social activity of conscientisation, thus allowing them to flourish as agents of socioeconomic transformation.

## **Conclusion**

A well-financed method of development in Jordan, microfinance has been branded by its supporters as a mechanism of women's empowerment. Indeed,

by a neoliberal standard which prioritises individual financial responsibility and inclusion in the free market as empowering virtues, MFIs in Jordan have been successful: they continuously expand their outreach, claim high repayment rates, and deliberately target female clients, thus bringing more women into the labour force (Microfund For Women, 2019; Abdelkader & Mansouri, 2019; World Bank, 2017).

Neoliberalism's detractors, however, assert that development programmes which do not address structural inequities, do not empower vulnerable individuals and disempower workers as a social class by enforcing precarious informal employment (Sukarieh, 2016; Achcar, 2013; Bateman, 2010). Evidence from other countries further suggests that microfinance reinforces patriarchal institutions rather than challenging them, and blames women for systemic inadequacies (Karim, 2011; Manji, 2006). This research indicates that MFIs' narratives of empowerment are misleading: though singular success stories of women assisted by micro-loans may be heart-warming, they ignore foundational obstacles to women's equal social and political participation in Jordan. Under this system, individualist empowerment *is* the end-target for Jordan's vulnerable women rather than a means of resistance to capitalist and patriarchal institutions. Microfinance in Jordan is thus not unambiguously empowering for its clients despite its potential as an immediate mitigator of poverty.

Though microfinance may assist vulnerable women in the short-term by injecting cash into struggling households, it undermines women's empowerment by encouraging cooperation with and reliance on toxic systems, impeding women's collective conscientisation, and fortifying patriarchal dominance in small communities. Despite insistence by microfinance originator Muhammad Yunus and contemporary researchers like Haya Al-Dajani and Susan Marlow (2013) that microfinance can increase women's social and economic standing, evidence from several critical studies suggests microfinance does little to address systemic oppression and actually reinforces structures of inequality.

MFIs in Jordan do not measure success or 'empowerment' by examining women's statuses within their communities, access to insurance or social welfare, feelings of consciousness or solidarity, or engagement in feminist political actions;



rather, they quantify progress by business sustainability and sell the idea to international NGOs and donors with individual stories of 'improved lives.' Borrowers who fail to repay loans do not earn features on websites or promotional materials. This model which prioritises the yield of the individual client over challenging a discriminatory social order is incompatible with Freire's concept of power through conscientisation. The contrariety of quantifying disputed notions like 'empowerment' indicates the importance of reflexivity in the DE field. Language creates the assumptions behind development models, so the ambiguity of 'empowerment' must be confronted to investigate the efficacy of development projects.

Development education can assist grassroots challenges to precarious development models by engaging in Freirean conscientisation in its intended fashion; like any economic project, microfinance is not politically or ideologically neutral. By facilitating a space of critical inquiry and self-reflection, educators and students can participate in revolutionary processes and achieve empowerment in the form of liberation from social subjugation and economic exploitation.

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# WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES OF RESISTANCE TO EXTRACTIVISM

V'ENZA CIREFICE AND LYNDA SULLIVAN

**Abstract:** We are living in extreme times with planetary boundaries being breached and our current economic model pushing life to collapse. The pressure to switch to renewable energy can no longer be avoided. However, many industry actors want to continue with our current economic model and simply switch the energy source. For this to happen, mining needs to increase dramatically. Rural and indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by mining and other extractive industries, with severe negative consequences on local livelihoods, community cohesion and the environment. In this article we will explore the gendered impacts experienced by these communities, which see women facing the worst impacts of a neoliberal extractive agenda. Conversely, women are leading the resistance to extractivism and stepping outside of traditional gender roles to be leaders in movements fighting destructive extraction. We will draw upon examples from the Americas, through a lens of ecofeminism and feminist political ecology, to explore how the women of these movements are demanding systematic change to the paradigms of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy – highlighting that these forms of domination are connected and thus, need to be eliminated together.

**Key words:** Ecofeminism; Feminist Political Ecology; Extractivism; Resistance; Climate Change; Neoliberalism; Gender; Americas.

## Introduction

Our globe is facing climate chaos. Humans are confronted with their biggest existential threat ever. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report, published in October 2018 (IPCC, 2018), asserted that we have just 12 years to make dramatic changes if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change. Students, the world over, are walking out of their educational institutions to demand that adults begin taking their future seriously (Laville, Noor & Walker, 2019). Global education, consequently, has a vital role to play in encouraging exploration of, and engagement in, this high priority topic. To begin with, global educators are best placed to teach about the causes and impacts of the climate

crisis and the linkages to global inequality and injustice (Hitchcock, 2019:7). Secondly, the educational process can provide a structure through which students can learn about current, and develop new, solutions to the crisis. Additionally, by encouraging the participation of students in the climate strike in a safe and educational way, educators are facilitating ‘an excellent learning experience through which students can develop key thinking skills, capabilities, attitudes and dispositions that will develop them as “contributors to society and the environment”’ (McCloskey, 2019).

Delving deeper into the complex issue of solutions to the climate crisis, one oft-quoted solution is renewable energy, which has already been incorporated into government policies (McNaught et al., 2013) and the Northern Ireland curriculum (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, 2016; 2018). Solar, wind, hydro, bio-fuels, these are some of the developments given by technology that are cited as healthy alternatives to our dependence on fossil fuels. The burning of fossil fuels is one of the main contributors to the planetary crisis, producing carbon and other greenhouse gases (Nunez, 2019). The need to switch to renewable energy can no longer be ignored. However, the journey there is crucial and global education should highlight the intricacies of this. If we leave untouched the system that brought us to breaking point then we will ultimately assimilate renewable energy into the neoliberal agenda based on deregulation, privatisation and a ‘free market’ economy (Ostry, Loungani & Furceri, 2016). Thus, our future will be premised on old distortions, carrying over social, economic and environmental injustices into new structures that will alleged save the planet (Hitchcock, 2019:11).

To illustrate this, we follow through what it means to retain our current economic model, forever wanting, forever consuming, and simply switch the energy source to renewables. For this to happen, mining needs to increase dramatically (Dominish, Florin and Teske, 2019: 5). Rare earth metals especially, and other metals such as copper, will be in high demand as they are key components in solar panels, batteries, electric cars etc. To date those most affected by mining and other extractive industries are rural and indigenous communities in the global South (Trócaire, 2019: 13), with severe negative consequences on local livelihoods, community cohesion and the environment. If we continue with business as usual, which means more extraction, it will be these communities

who will suffer the most. For example, a recent World Bank study identified Latin America, Africa and Asia as key targets going forward for rare earth and other critical metals (World Bank, 2017). There is also a gendered dimension to the impacts of mining, with women more affected than men, for reasons that we will explore in this article. Thus, extraction to satisfy the demand for renewables within the neoliberal system will further discriminate against women.

However, by looking at how women are resisting destructive extraction, and drawing on the theories of ecofeminism and feminist political ecology, we can see how, through the essence of their resistance, women, and especially indigenous and rural women, are leading the way out of the trap. This article will draw on examples from the Americas to show how women from movements in this region are demanding a systematic change to the paradigms of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, highlighting how these forms of domination are connected and, thus, need to be eliminated completely. We conclude with practical suggestions as to how these themes could be incorporated into an educational setting.

### **What is extractivism?**

Extractivism can be defined as ‘activities that remove large volumes of non-processed natural resources (or resources that are limited in quantity), particularly for export’ (Acosta, 2017: 81). It is often tied up with transnational capital, the state and neoliberal agendas. But it is much more than that; it is a way of seeing the world. Klein, (2015: 169) calls extractivism, a ‘dominance-based relationship with the earth, one of purely taking’, which is ‘the opposite of stewardship’. The main forms of extractivism are mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction (including fracking). However, deforestation and industrial agriculture are also sometimes considered forms of extractivism as they extract resources from the land causing severe ecological depletion. Hitchcock (2019: 9) further explains extractivism as ‘high-intensity, export-oriented extraction of common ecological goods rooted in colonialism and the notion that humans are separate from, and superior to, the rest of the living world’.

### **Theoretical framework**

#### *Ecofeminism and Feminist Political Ecology*

The closely related ecological feminist approaches of socialist/materialist ecofeminism (Merchant, 1980; Mellor, 1992; Plumwood, 1993; Warren, 1997; Federici, 2004; Gaard, 2015) and feminist political ecology (herein, FPE) (Agarwal, 1992, 2001; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996; MacGregor, 2006, 2010, 2013; Salleh, 2009; Elmhirst, 2011; Sultana, 2011, 2013; Veuthrey & Gerber, 2012; Resurreccion, 2013) offer a fertile perspective to understand extractivism. FPE 're-engages and rethinks neoliberal extractivism and violence through our analysis of our experience of diverse nature-cultures as part of a collective and ongoing process of decolonising development practices, political ecology and feminism' (Harcourt & Nelson, 2015: 23). Political ecology reminds us that human-environment relationships are mediated by wealth and power. It links political, economic and social factors with environmental change. FPE, therefore, adds a gendered analysis to these processes.

Ecofeminism is a reaction to how women and nature have been marginalised in modern patriarchal society, and highlights that all types of domination (capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy) are connected, therefore, one cannot be eliminated without the others. Materialist and socialist ecofeminists have rejected the essentialism of any special or biological link between women and nature as proposed by spiritual ecofeminists (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990). Instead they locate the oppression of women and nature in capitalist patriarchal structures and the exploitative relations of capitalist production, connecting the exploitation of resources to the degradation of nature and women (Merchant, 1980; Mies, 1981; Federici, 2004). This approach also recognises that both categories are socially constructed and in such a way that devalues them.

Nature	Culture
Women	Men
Passive	Active
Object	Subject
Emotion	Rationality
Traditional/Primitive	Modern/Civilized
Body	Mind
Non-Western	Western
Private Sphere	Public Sphere

Table 1: Dualistic thought structures (Cirefice and Sullivan)

Ecofeminists have located the root of extractive ecological exploitation and social injustices in the patriarchal capitalist worldview that emerges from the Cartesian dualism (Merchant, 1980; Shiva, 1989; Plumwood, 1993). The roots of the subjugation of women and nature are embedded in modern knowledge, which is dualistic and developed during the Enlightenment period. This era saw the rise of the scientific and industrial revolutions and capitalism, and so ecofeminists critique the knowledge these ‘progresses’ are based on. René Descartes established the Cartesian dualism of mind and body which extended to others, such as, culture/nature, man/woman, civilised/primitive (Merchant, 1980), as seen in table 1. Ecofeminists argue this worldview is detrimental for nature, women and indigenous communities who are placed on the ‘passive’ or ‘object’ side of the dualism, implying they are resources, which are lacking in agency (Plumwood, 1993). Women become ‘viewed as the “other”, the passive non-self’ (Shiva, 1989: 14), hence, ecofeminists emphasise the agency of all humans and nonhumans who have been oppressed under this Cartesian division of the world. Ecofeminists see the legacy of these thought structures continuing into extractive capitalist exploitation today, in which both women and nature become ‘othered’ to justify seeing them as inanimate resources.

In the Cartesian worldview we see the objectification of the earth and devaluation of the frontline communities who suffer the worst impacts of extraction (Jewett & Garavan, 2018), with extraction points considered as

peripheral, as ‘sacrifice zones’ (Ashwood & MacTavish, 2016; Klein, 2015). Many indigenous perspectives have highlighted that the opposite to extractivism is ‘deep reciprocity; it’s respect, it’s relationship, it’s responsibility and it’s local’ (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson quoted in Di Chiro, 2015: 217). Ecofeminism and FPE argue that the notion that nature is separate from us is central to environmental crises (Plumwood, 1993), therefore, relational approaches are needed which re-emphasise interconnection (Whatmore, 2002; Crittenden, 2000; Salleh, 1997; Plumwood, 1993; Haraway, 1991, 2008). Ecofeminists and FPE theorists recognise that challenges to the oppressive world order seek to move from a dualistic, extractive, mechanistic, anthropocentric worldview to relations of an interconnected, relational and biocentric world. Thus, an ecofeminist and FPE lens can provide a useful critical theoretical frame through which to explore and investigate the experiences, practices and worldviews of activists involved in contesting extractive development processes. Both FPE and ecofeminism share an interest in the role of women in collective activism around environmental issues and how gender is configured in these struggles to redefine environmental issues by including women’s knowledge, experience and interests (Moeckli & Braun, 2001: 123).

### **Why are women disproportionately impacted?**

Most of the socio-environmental costs of the extractive industry are felt by the rural populations of extractive regions, however women are often disproportionately impacted (Barcia, 2017). The benefits of resource extraction include employment, although most jobs are held almost exclusively by men. The negative effects, however, are felt in the household, where due to gender socialisation, women have the most responsibility (Federici, 2004). The gender division of labour brings women in contact with natural resources and the environment for subsistence. Women, as primary care-givers, have a material connection as key stakeholders in farming and managing natural resources, as well as household consumption (MacGregor, 2006; Martinez-Alier, 2002; Agarwal, 1992). Therefore, when extraction impacts the local environment, women are on the frontline of its impacts. For example, water resources can be poisoned and drained, mine blasting can create problems such as air pollution and damage to housing, and there is an associated increase in alcoholism and domestic violence (Gies, 2015). These impacts are especially felt by indigenous communities who rely on natural resources for their subsistence economy; for

hunting, fishing, foraging, medicine and culture. Moreover, in the Americas, indigenous people, particularly women, are further disadvantaged by societal and economic problems as a result of colonialism, such as poverty and marginalisation, a lack of power and land rights and a limited influence on decision making (Smith, 1997; Nestra, 1999).

Therefore, it is women's material conditions which push them to resist. For example, in Guatemala, the Kaqchikel women's movement see their activism as 'care work'. The environmental destruction impacts most on reproductive work which is done by women. Women are involved in this not due to some natural or essentialist characteristic which makes women more caring, but because they are conditioned to be caregivers through a process of gendered socialisation. The Kaqchikel women are critical of the ways in which care work overburdens women, their movements want to see a re-valuing and redistribution of care work in society (Hallum-Montes, 2012: 115). Women's resistance needs to be understood in relation to gender relations and resource management and use and not idealised. From this vantage point, relationships with the environment are gendered due to the division of labour and socialised gender roles, following which, gendered understandings of environmental change need to integrate subjectivities, scales, places, and power relations (Sultana, 2013: 374). By questioning essentialising discourses, FPE perspectives can be critical of narratives that romanticise women as having a special innate relationship to the environment which naturalises their reproductive work and resistance.

Patriarchy's disregard for nature, women and indigenous people is further compounded by colonial legacies which impact on the bodies of indigenous women (Smith, 2003: 81). The attack on nature by mining industries can also impact on indigenous women's bodies as the effects of radiation poisoning are most apparent on women's reproductive systems with impacts such as increased cases of ovarian cancer, miscarriages and birth defects (Smith, 2003: 82). In the Blackhills, in the United States (US), women on the PineRidge reservation experience a miscarriage rate six times higher than the national average (Smith, 1997: 23). The same conceptual framework of thought that commodifies and exploits nature can be extended to women's bodies and in this case, indigenous women.

Studies have also drawn the link between sexual violence and the mining industry (Cane, Terbish & Bymbasuren, 2004) which will be explored further later. Women who resist extraction, standing up for their communities, lands and environment are often the targets of gender specific violence and threats (Barcia, 2017). In many ways they are challenging not only corporate power but patriarchal structures and gender norms (Barcia, 2017: 5; Willow and Keefer, 2015). Smith (2003) believes indigenous women's bodies threaten the legitimacy of coloniser states like the US because of their ability to reproduce and continue resistance. She sees colonialism as structured on the logic of sexual violence; colonised people are projected as body as opposed to mind, much in the same way colonised nature is seen as raw materials without agency (Smith, 2003: 82). Both nature and women are understood as the passive 'Other' and a commodity to be exploited.

## **Women on the Frontlines**

*Why are (indigenous) women on the frontlines fighting a neoliberal extractivist agenda?*

Many of the accounts above portray women as passive victims, reinforcing dualistic thought structures which place women on the passive, object side of the dualism. Therefore, highlighting the agency of women, their subjectivity, resistance and activism becomes paramount. Ecofeminism highlights the link between the abuse of earth and suppression of women, but there is also a strong link between empowerment and activism of women and the healing of the earth. Examples of this include The Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN, 2019) which has many campaigns and groups in the Americas and around the world connecting women's solutions and resistance to extractive industries. Also, in September 2015, the Indigenous Women of the Americas signed a Defend Mother Earth Treaty against extractive industry (Indigenous Rising, 2015). It stated that:

“While opposing extractive industries, women human rights defenders are advancing alternative economic and social models based on the stewardship of land and common resources in order to preserve life,



thereby contributing to the emergence of new paradigms” (Barcia, 2017:12).

This alternative worldview is seen in the following case studies which highlight the agency of women in their resistance to social and environmental injustice. There is a huge political and practical significance to the hundreds of women who initiated protests and grassroots organising activities for both women and nature (Warren, 1997:10). As previously outlined, women are often prime movers in protecting the environment not because they have some special essentialist link to it but because in many cases they are affected the most by environmental destruction. Similarly, women often play a primary role in community action because it's within the domestic sphere, a domain related to women due to gender norms. Women are providing small scale solutions with large impacts while reclaiming power at the local level (Hamilton, 1991).

FPE literature has critiqued the fact that a focus on women as environmental saviours can lead to an increased environmental responsibility and unpaid work for women (MacGregor, 2013). FPE adds to debates by highlighting the need for context specific accounts of gender and material realities to avoid homogenising women, romanticising their resistance or placing unwanted responsibility on them for creating solutions. The stereotype of women as environmental victims or as environmental caretakers can contradict the complex daily reality of resource use, power and negotiation (Resurrección, 2013). Further, by glorifying indigenous women's movements it is easy to hide the other elements of reality that are not so glorious: the violence, poverty and exhaustion they face on a day to day basis (Lind, 2003).

It remains important, therefore, to counter the narrative of rural and indigenous women as powerless victims of environmental change with no mention of their life experiences, their struggles, resistances or alliances (Dey, Resurreccion & Doneys, 2014: 946). Indigenous women's activism against extractive industry and environmental degradation is diverse and needs to be understood in relation to the social, historical, political and economic setting in which it is embedded. These resistances are demanding systematic change to the paradigms of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy and demanding respect and protection of women's bodies, land, water, mother earth, culture and community

(Gies, 2015). The next section provides examples from the Americas, through a lens of ecofeminism and feminist political ecology, that explore how women are demanding systematic change to the paradigms of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.

## **Case studies from around the Americas**

### *North American- Indigenous women resist*

Honor the Earth is an organisation set up by indigenous ecofeminist Winona LaDuke. This organisation highlights the interconnectedness of the domination of nature, indigenous people and women. Honor the Earth has a campaign against sexual violence in extraction zones. They state that there is an epidemic of sexual violence perpetrated against indigenous women driven by extreme extraction in the Bakken oil fields, North Dakota and the Tar Sands of Alberta. In these locations the violations against the earth run parallel to the violation of human rights. They requested a formal intervention by the United Nations (UN) and their submission document contextualises the relationship between oil booms and sex trafficking booms within broader historical processes of colonisation and genocide (Memee Harvard, 2015).

This campaign argues that the same conceptual framework which commodifies and exploits nature can be extended to (indigenous) women's bodies. Studies have drawn the link between sexual violence and the mining industry (Cane, Terbish & Bymbasuren, 2014; Memee Harvard, 2015; Farley et al., 2011). Sex trafficking, which disproportionately affects indigenous women in North America, is higher near points of extraction where there are large camps of temporary, highly paid male labour (Memee Harvard, 2015). Gies (2015) highlights that for the women involved in resisting extractive industry their fight against gender violence, that disproportionately affects indigenous women, is integral to their struggle. Canadians highlight that in their country over 4,000 murdered and missing indigenous women have been largely uninvestigated (Ibid).

Indigenous women's resistance in Canada is strong too; the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network is made up of 90 percent women (Ibid). Further, women are at the heart of the Klabona Keepers, a society formed by Tahltan

Elders, fight to protect the ecologically sacred headwaters in northern British Columbia from mining contamination (Roy, 2019). As well as protecting the right to their ancestral lands, they are also protecting the biodiversity they depend on for hunting, fishing and foraging for their livelihood (Gies, 2015). The Unist'ot'en blockade camp is led by Freda Hudson and stands against oil and gas pipelines coming from the Tar Sands operation in Alberta. The proposed pipeline would encroach on the Witsuwit'en people's unceded territory (Temper, 2019). They have created a border to their un-surrendered land, and demand that their consent is needed to go there. This is a right enshrined by the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples which they reinforce (Toledano, 2014).

Mining has had a key role in Indian-settler relations from as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Ali, 2003: 6). It is closely tied to issues of colonialism and how indigenous people were erased from their lands (Braun, 2000; Stanley, 2013). The construction of a wilderness, available for exploitation, was seen by colonial powers as completely separated from human, cultural influence. This impression of empty, virgin land, legally justified its confiscation by the Terra Nullius Act (Stanley, 2013). Moreover, the land was often gendered in colonial accounts and was represented as a feminine space with successful use of the wilderness compared to acts of sexual conquest and rape. It also enabled mining companies to capitalise on aboriginal unemployment and use their lands and bodies as waste sinks (Stanley, 2013: 211).

As environmental destruction from mining can be regarded as a form of colonialism and racism which has marked Indian/ White relations since the arrival of Columbus in 1492 (Halder, 2004: 103), the environmental impacts of mining cannot be examined without also considering their impacts on indigenous culture and bodies. Indigenous peoples have strong cultural and social links to their land (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013: 1792). Because of this, native people need high levels of environmental quality to meet not only physical but spiritual needs. As these religious rights are inseparable from environmental protection, this makes the indigenous case different from environmental racism in other contexts (Nestra, 1999: 114). Mining can have devastating effects on the environment and can compromise native culture and social life as sites of cultural significance are sometimes destroyed (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013: 1791).

Studies of environmental racism have shown how native lands are frequently used as sites of mining, toxic dumps and nuclear and military testing (Nestra, 1999: 114). In North America, 60 percent of energy resources are found on Indian land (Smith, 1997: 22), and are frequently threatened by capitalist operations. For example, the Blackhills, home to the Lakota Sioux, has faced many problems relating to mining. When gold was discovered in 1875 and by 1877 on their land, the Sioux lost their land rights (Halder, 2004: 108).

### *Latin America*

Gender based violence and extractive activities in Latin America often go hand in hand. One example is the case of Margarita Caal Caal, an indigenous woman, one of ten women gang raped and then forcibly evicted from their homes in a village in Lote Ocho, Guatemala, by a Canadian mining firm (Daley, 2016). Mrs. Caal has taken her case to the Canadian courts to demand justice for what she suffered. So, the feminist environmental struggles see this violence as a result of the same oppressive systems (capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy) that exploit the earth. It is these connections between physical and sexual violence against women and the exploitation of the land which informs their resistance (Gies, 2015).

In 2015, six indigenous Mapuche women in Argentina, at the heart of a fight against fracking, chained their bodies to fracking drills in protest. Moreno (2016) argues that these women face a triple intersectional threat as indigenous, women and workers of the earth. In their worldview there is no division of nature and culture (Moreno, 2016), unlike the logic of capitalism (Klein, 2014; Bauhardt, 2013; Federici, 2004) which is embedded in this dualism (see table 1). In the Mapuche language of these indigenous women there is no concept equivalent to natural resource, there is no need to accumulate a surplus, and the natural world is inseparable from the social world (Moreno, 2016). Ecofeminists point out that women struggle against extractivism because this system is based on a mechanistic rationality historically associated with masculinity (see table 1) and positioned as superior to non-rational ways connected to feeling, the earth and taking care of life (Moreno, 2016). For these struggles there is no separation between production and reproduction, land and life, resistance and survival, and that is why women take on leadership roles in defending their territory and fighting gendered oppression (Gies, 2015).

Feminist approaches have highlighted that the personal is political and so link processes at differing scales from the household and body to the national, international and global (Monhanty, 2007; Truelove, 2011). In her study with indigenous Kaqchikel women in Guatemala, Hallum-Montes (2012) highlighted that the women saw a link between challenging domestic violence and the abuse of 'Mother Earth'. These women who established the 'Women United for the Love of Life' group bring a gendered consciousness to their environmental activism and link their local activism to wider social movements.

These struggles are intersectional and so link environmental activism to issues of gender, race, class, opposing the interlocking systems of oppression and privilege and so they relate these systems of patriarchy, colonialism and racism to their everyday lives (Hallum-Montes, 2012: 105). The impacts of extractivism on women's material subsistence structure their mobilisations against the extractive industries thus making visible the impacts of industrial capitalism on the environment and their own lives. They challenge power relations on many scales; between local poor communities and national elites and between men and women in their villages (Veuthey & Gerber, 2012: 620). Framing discussions about extraction only in technical environmental terms or only in relation to climate change can silence the social injustice, particularly gendered issues, which are sometimes connected to these projects. It also marginalises issues that are often most relevant to women's lives, such as polluted water, increased gender violence or contaminated land and food insecurity.

## **Global Learning**

The case studies set out above on women and extractivism can support further discussion on issues of gender, patriarchy, extractivism, colonialism, and neoliberalism. Exploring the essential link between these paradigms could make an invaluable contribution to global education. Debating the impact of extractivism on women, particularly indigenous activists, offers the opportunity to analyse factors underpinning oppression, empowerment and systemic change. Through the example of women, especially indigenous and rural women, young people can flesh out the meaning behind the popular chant often heard at the Youth for Climate Strikes: 'system change, not climate change'. There are various tools and resources that could be employed to bring this issue to students. For example, the use of case studies to illustrate theory, as we have done, is a useful

tool which can stimulate creative thinking, open-mindedness and empathy. Comhlámh, the Irish development non-governmental organisation (NGO), is producing a resource, called *Digging Deeper*, on extractivism in Peru and Ireland, which includes case studies of activists involved in mining conflicts from both countries. Also, Trócaire and The Future We Need have produced a mining toolkit entitled *Digging At Our Conscience* (The Future We Need, 2016).

Additionally, there are numerous visual aids that capture the complexities of gender and extractivism. From Peru, *Las Damas Azules* (ISF, 2015) showcases women involved in the defence of their land against mining and their reasons for becoming active in the resistance movement. Also, from Peru, *La Hija de La Laguna* (Cabellos, 2015), explores one woman's spiritual connection with the water she is protecting, along with her community. From Bolivia, *Abuela Grillo* (The Animation Workshop, 2010) is a visually stunning short animation following the grandmother figure representing water who is threatened by a corporation who wants to bottle her tears which is based on the Water Wars in Bolivia in 2000 (Democracy Now, 2010).

Another avenue for global education on extractivism would be to link with organisations locally and globally who are working on these issues. Learners could be encouraged to organise a volunteer project or solidarity action with the communities in defence of their resources, land and rights. This would provide a form of experiential learning based on the realities of extractivism both locally and globally. Some Irish organisations operating in the Americas and working on extractivism are Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC), Trócaire, Comhlámh and Friends of the Earth (country specific).

## Conclusion

This article has explored extractivism through the framework of ecofeminism. It has considered how women and nature are dually exploited because they are seen as 'other' and without agency by the paradigms that underpin their exploitation; namely capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. Furthermore, by not romanticising women's involvement in the resistance against extractivism, but rather understanding it in terms of a division of labour and socialised gender roles, we escape the trap of inadvertently reinforcing these political, economic and social injustices. The case studies presented not only illustrate the violence the

system imposes on women and nature, but also highlights the link between the empowerment and activism of women and the healing of the earth. Global education is well positioned to bring these issues to learners through the use of interactive and participative training methodologies that illustrate how the paradigms propping up the extractivist agenda are also driving us to the brink of climate chaos and mass extinction. We can make use of the educational space to explore the complexities and solutions to the crises our world is facing, as well as encouraging active projects of global citizenship, such as participation in the climate strikes or other forms of exercising their agency.

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# Perspectives

## “DOING GENDER” DIFFERENTLY: A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE WITH TRÓCAIRE’S DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENTS

ÁINE O’DRISCOLL AND CAROL WRENN

**Abstract:** This article explores a cross-organisational initiative of creating a Healthy Relationships Youth Manual, which has helped alter the internal dynamic of development education (DE) in Trócaire. The manual is a culmination of multiple elements: it is rooted in DE and youth work principles, guided by adult learning methodologies and is underpinned by a strong gendered lens which aims to challenge unequal gendered power relations. It is developed using the expertise of country-based colleagues in Sierra Leone, and staff with considerable youth work and gender expertise in Ireland.

**Key words:** Gender; Women’s Empowerment; Youth Work; Development Education (DE); Global and Critical Education.

### Introduction

This article explores a cross-organisational initiative of creating a healthy relationships youth manual: ‘Getting to know me: Supporting young people to grow in confidence’ (Trócaire, 2019). The development of this manual has provided an opportunity to re-think the relationship between Trócaire’s development education (DE) and overseas programmes by expanding on our partnership model approach through deepening the linkages of our overseas country programmes with our DE unit. Through the creation of ‘Getting to know me’ for use in Sierra Leone, we highlight the importance of drawing on extensive local knowledge of the Sierra Leone context, building on Trócaire’s experience of developing innovative DE material within Ireland; and making use of Trócaire’s deep knowledge of youth work principles as well as significant gender expertise. In the process of sharing this example, the authors reflect on the positive lessons

from this initiative as well as taking stock of strengthening opportunities for this partnership and the implications of this for other North-South partnerships.

### **Trócaire's approach to partnership and development education**

Working in partnership means that Trócaire supports local organisations in the global South to implement projects in collaboration with their local communities. These organisations bring an in-depth understanding of their local context, language and culture, while Trócaire contributes its experience, funding and staff. By working in partnership, Trócaire does not implement 'one-size fits-all' projects but listens to what people need and gives them support, ownership and control over how the problems they face are solved. This approach brings lasting change and empowers communities to overcome poverty through their own efforts and abilities.

Our DE mission is informed by Trócaire's dual mandate. Overseas, to deliver support through local partner organisations to enable at-risk families and communities to free themselves from the oppression of poverty. At home, to increase awareness and understanding of global justice issues to motivate and mobilise the Irish public to demand and work for a more just world. Trócaire recognises the crucial role DE plays in bringing this mandate to life. Trócaire views DE as a pedagogy that addresses the structural causes of poverty, injustice and inequality in our world. Trócaire's DE lens is often focused on the global South with an aim to equip learners in the global North with the knowledge and competencies to make informed decisions and take meaningful action aligned to their values. Core aims of DE include promoting an understanding of global development issues and fostering the emergence of informed and active global citizens (Irish Aid, 2006).

However, much of DE's global citizenship agenda relates to the global North. DE in the global North is historically rooted in non-government organisation (NGO) education activities for both formal and informal education audiences, aimed at rallying public support for development in the global South (McCloskey, 2014). Over time, DE has adopted a critical lens in overseas aid programmes, with the introduction of themes of power, social justice and equality into its narrative (Bourn, 2014). With the work of educationalists such as Paulo Freire (1972), a strong critical pedagogy within DE has evolved which includes:



an emphasis on developing partnerships between educators and learners in the global North and South; the promotion of social justice, empathy and solidarity; and a commitment to participatory and transformative learning processes, with an emphasis on dialogue and experience. To date, this shift, which takes the interdependent nature of global relationships into account, has not been significantly developed within Trócaire's DE unit in a practical sense.

In general, Trócaire's DE team documents the lived experiences of people affected by global injustice in the global South and represents their stories authentically in (primarily) formal education resources for schools in the global North. This new collaborative initiative of creating DE resources to be used in the global South provides an opportunity to reflect on the position and function of DE within Trócaire's broader programme. It broadens the scope of Trócaire's partnership model and provides the opportunity for adopting a renewed strategic approach to work with those delivering programmes at a grassroots level.

### **Getting to know me: supporting young people to grow in confidence**

The development of a youth-centred Healthy Relationships manual was created through collaboration with Trócaire's Sierra Leonean Gender Technical Advisor, Trócaire's Youth Officer within the Irish DE unit, and Trócaire's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Advisor and Women's Empowerment Advisor who are based within the International Programme's team in Ireland. This cross-organisational collaboration provided an opportunity to incorporate DE approaches and principles while at the same time ensuring the work was culturally and contextually appropriate and underpinned by a strong gendered lens. This section outlines the principles and theories which underpin the manual as well as the process of its development and roll out.

#### *Principles underpinning youth work, DE and work to support gender equality*

The DE unit within Trócaire is guided by youth work and DE principles. Trócaire's vision for a youth work-based resource is rooted in the definition of youth work identified in the Youth Work Act:

“a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to

their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations” (Youth Work Act, 2001).

Critical DE shares many of the same principles as good youth work. These include: starting with and valuing young people’s own views; learning through participation; and promoting equality, responsibility and mutual respect.

Based on these principles, key elements to this approach include: a recognition of the role of power and ideology in determining the form and content of non-formal education; a critical awareness of how knowledge is constructed and interpreted; an understanding of dominant and subordinate cultures; and an examination of the root causes of issues as well as the broader social context (Giroux, 2005; Andreotti, 2008). The critical approach of DE that draws on the work of theorists such as Paulo Freire (1972), bell hooks (1994) and Henry Giroux (2005) among others, has, according to Skinner, Blum and Bourn (2013: 95) ‘a significant role to play in the development of effective learning’.

One of the responsibilities of the Women’s Empowerment and SGBV Advisors, who are based within Trócaire’s International Programmes team, is to support country-based teams and partner organisations with strategies and approaches to support gendered social norms change. A social norm is an attribute / rule of a group or community that is perceived to be appropriate for its members (Mackie, 2018). Social norms are expectations that family, community and society set down for boys and girls, men and women. They can be closely linked to culture, religion and traditional beliefs. Social norms impact on all people in society from birth through childhood, adulthood and old age. Parents, teachers, friends, media, education institutions and the community all take part in the construction and maintenance of social norms. Social norms lead us to adopt attitudes and expectations about girls, boys, women and men. They guide gender roles and determine who has power and who is valued in our societies. Social norms are learned from the people and institutions around us, vary in different societies and change over time. Gendered social norms specify acceptable behavioural boundaries for women and men. These generally correspond to the division of labour and power relations within specific settings. For example, a gendered norm could be ‘a woman’s place is in the home’. Norms

such as this can severely limit women's opportunities, impact women's confidence in their abilities, impact both women's and men's mental health and prevent men from taking on care-giving roles.

In recent years, Trócaire's Programme Advisors have been analysing and reflecting on the effectiveness of our work to address gendered social norms and have consolidated a significant body of learning on the impact of social norms change methodologies (Trócaire, 2018a). As a result, Trócaire has developed a set of guiding principles to support our work on social norms change with adults (Trócaire 2018b). This work is based on background research on a number of social norms change theories, a scoping of literature on current best practice on gendered social norms change and learning from our country programmes. Despite the fact that these guiding principles are for work with adults, they are also very much in line with critical DE and youth work principles. Trócaire's gendered social norms change principles include: being women-centred; using a strong gender analysis; using methodologies that facilitate reflection and promote and inspire activism; investing heavily in partner field office staff and community facilitators; understanding when it is appropriate to use single-sex or mixed sex groups; ensuring accountable practice; using the socio-ecological model; working with community stakeholders and agents of change; applying a phased approach; and preparing for and anticipating resistance.

### *Writing, piloting and delivery of the manual*

'Getting to know me' (Trócaire, 2019) is a training guide for community facilitators to improve and explore concepts and issues relating to healthy relationships with 9-14 year olds in Sierra Leone. In doing so, it aims to provide access to quality education in a safe learning environment in a non-formal educational space. The training manual grew from a deep understanding of the above-mentioned principles.

The purpose of the manual is to ultimately help young people develop and explore the types of behaviours, attitudes *and skills* that align to the promotion of healthy relationships. It is based on 14 modules which include exploration of self, family, friendships, relationships, as well as discussing cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes and gender roles. Some of the activities within these modules have been adapted from '*I am Somebody*': *National Life Skills*

*Curriculum Sierra Leone* (2016) as well as tried and tested activities that local partner organisations were already using. All of the modules involve participatory approaches and reflective methodologies, and in some of the sessions, guidance is provided to separate the group into girls and boys to allow for deeper reflection on specific issues. Detailed guidance is provided at the beginning of the manual to ensure that parental/guardian consent is provided and that parents/guardians and the wider community have a good understanding of the content of the modules. This will help to ensure that there is both endorsement of the manual as well as support for the core messaging within the manual.

Trócaire's Sierra Leonean Gender Technical Advisor developed an initial first draft of the manual to ensure the core content was culturally appropriate. It was then handed over to Trócaire's Youth officer who revised it with a strong youth-centred lens and worked very closely with the Trócaire's Sierra Leonean Gender Technical Advisor, and Trócaire's SGBV and Women's Empowerment Advisors. These Advisors provided detailed comments on initial drafts and discussed how many of the activities would work in the specific areas of programming in Sierra Leone. Following the finalisation of the working manual, Trócaire's programme advisors in Sierra Leone introduced the manual to Trócaire's partner organisations through a facilitated four-day workshop. Partner organisations have since provided feedback on this working draft, which is currently being amended by Trócaire's Youth Officer. The next steps in this process will be to provide further facilitation skills training to the partner organisations who will be rolling out the manual and to test it in a couple of communities within Sierra Leone. Following this testing and possible further amendment, four of Trócaire's partner organisations in Sierra Leone will start using it in their project areas.

The cross-departmental work on 'Getting to know me' has provided an opportunity to understand both the synergies and the divergences between youth work, critical DE and gendered social norms change work with adults. It has resulted in a manual that is age appropriate, grounded in DE and youth work and underpinned by a strong gendered lens which is now at the stage of being tested in practice. The training modules will help build the knowledge and skills of both facilitators and participants involved in order to successfully create change. The manual is not a standalone intervention, but a skill-building tool that draws

upon adolescent psychology and its influence on health-related behaviour (Pringle et al., 2018).

### **Moving forward**

Education is regarded as key to addressing ecological, technological, social, cultural, economic and personal change (Share et al., 2012). Many sociologists view education as a key driver of change and as a vehicle to develop society and communities (Clancy, 1995). The educational process must be experienced in the context of citizenship; that is, it must be planned and implemented according to values and principles posed by society. This approach is focused on learning strategies that are open and participatory, incorporating the recognition of power. As a consequence, it requires teachers capable of stimulating collaborative and critical learning processes (hooks, 1994).

Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of the youth manual is the often-harsh realities encountered in implementation. As highlighted above, following the development of the 'Getting to know me' manual (Trócaire, 2019) and piloting phase, community workers within four of Trócaire's partner organisations in Sierra Leone need to be trained on how to use it. Rather than require one standard set of materials and curricula, or government standards, which are unlikely to be relevant across different contexts, we can instead support community educators to develop the confidence they need to address difficult issues and choose the most relevant materials for their context and the particular youth group they are working with. This requires significant time, ongoing investment and needs to be rooted in strong youth work principles. We also need to ensure that parents, schools, and relevant government and other funding bodies respect community educators and support them in the difficult task of preparing young people.

We need to ensure the youth manual is rolled out in a comprehensive and meaningful way with the required investment and resources. Its effectiveness will depend on complementary strategies that are also underpinned by a combination of the deep contextual knowledge and relationships our partner organisations have with the communities they work with, the guiding principles for Trócaire's social norms change work, and our youth work experience within the DE team.

## Conclusion

The development of 'Getting to know me' has provided an opportunity to deepen linkages across departments within Trócaire and alter the position and function of DE within Trócaire's broader programmes. It broadens the scope of Trócaire's partnership model and provides the opportunity for adopting a renewed strategic approach to work with those delivering programmes and at grassroots level. The process has shown us the synergies across our youth work, DE and women's empowerment programming and demonstrated that many of the underlying principles which inform these elements of our work are complementary. It has resulted in a manual that is age appropriate, grounded in DE and youth work and underpinned by a strong gendered lens. As a cross-departmental team we look forward to continuing on this journey together and working out the finer details of both implementation and evaluation.

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# TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Gerry Jeffers and Nigel Quirke-Bolt

**Abstract:** This article explores the relationship between development education (DE) and the notion of teachers' identity. The Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (2016a) is seen as a significant step forward in clarifying the essential role of teachers. In interrogating the four underpinning ethical values associated with teaching in the *Code* - respect, care, integrity and trust - we find strong resonances with the traditions and ambitions of DE. We contend that a commitment to the advancement of human rights and to global justice perspectives generally follows organically from embracing the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*. Furthermore, we believe our conclusions have implications for Irish Aid, The Teaching Council, teachers, student-teachers, initial and ongoing teacher educators as well as DE practitioners.

**Key words:** Teacher Identity; Code of Professional Conduct; Global Citizenship; Development Education; Teaching Council; Irish Aid.

## **Introduction: shifting visions of teacher identity**

Teacher identity is a complex topic (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009: 175). How we understand it has implications for student teachers' learning and for the professional development of practicing teachers. Furthermore, 'identity is dynamic rather than stable, a constantly evolving phenomenon' (ibid: 177). This is particularly relevant in a rapidly changing world (Quirke-Bolt & Jeffers, 2018). For example, constructivist pedagogies which encourage social collaboration and enable educators to utilise the different capacities, knowledge and expertise of students in tackling problems and developing an enquiry process (Dewey, 1944) is enjoying a resurgence in popularity. In the Irish context, a re-imagined Junior Cycle (ages 12-15 years) curriculum gives a fresh prominence to, *inter alia*, themes of community cohesion, social justice, global sustainability and personal well-being (NCCA, 2011; DES, 2012; DES, 2015).

These themes have a heightened relevance in today's world and carry significant implications for how teachers see themselves and their roles. Understandably, a perception of 'initiative overload' (McHugh, 2018) indicates how curricular change can challenge many embedded views of teachers' identities and practices. We write as teacher-educators with a particular interest in how the values and perspectives of development education might enrich teachers' professional identities. We also believe that an enhanced sense of identity can inspire teachers to work collaboratively as active agents with their students by enquiring into and taking action on practical problems facing our world (Hackman, 2005; Boylan and Woolsey, 2015). This article suggests that The Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* offers a new articulation of teacher identity and deserves wider consideration. In particular, we consider the implications of the specific ethical values of respect, care, integrity and trust in a wider global context.

### **Irish Aid Strategy**

The Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 - 2023 is driven by an overarching vision of 'a sustainable and just world where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential' (Irish Aid, 2016: 2). This official policy document from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade notes in relation to supporting teachers and student teachers that: 'We will pursue opportunities with the Teaching Council to increase coherence between development education and relevant criteria and guidelines for teachers' learning' (Irish Aid, 2016: 30). One possible route to achieving this worthy and challenging aspiration of 'greater coherence' is via the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (2016a).

### **Development education 'champions'**

Gleeson et al (2007: 60) noted that many of those who integrate development education in Irish second-level schools are individual teacher enthusiasts driven by their own values rather than officially adopted policies or curricular programmes. Similarly, Bryan and Bracken (2011: 188) noted: '... the responsibility for the incorporation of Development Education into the formal curriculum falls squarely upon the shoulders of individual teachers'. Thus, teachers who find opportunities to teach social justice generally and development

education in particular in the schools where they work might be described as ‘champions’. This centrality of ‘champions’ offers some pointers to how greater teacher ownership of education for global citizenship might grow. The studies cited above frequently refer to the underlying assumptions, values and beliefs of the champion teachers. Typically, these teachers are described as those with the passion, commitment and expertise to teach development education (see also McKeown et al: 2002). Such teachers typically see themselves as global citizens, committed to social justice, equality and a fairer distribution of the world’s resources, who value and respect diversity and inclusion, and who have a strong sense of human solidarity. They are also characterised as people of empathy, with a belief that teachers can make a difference in the lives of the people they teach and beyond (see also Vare and Scott: 2007). Frequently, these champions also express concern for the environment and invariably have a commitment to the ideals enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNEP, 2013; UN, 2015).

Are such orientations exceptional among teachers? Is it reasonable to think that valuing human rights, solidarity, sustainability and global interconnectedness are desirable traits in all teachers, that such commitment might even translate into indicators of what ‘good teaching should look like’? In exploring these questions, the Teaching Council’s *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (2016a) offers a valuable point of reference. Its foreword states, *inter alia*, that:

“The Council works on the premise that advocacy and regulation are interdependent. This Code of Professional Conduct sets out the standards that teachers should adhere to at all stages of their career. It also describes a vision of what good teaching should look like. In this dual purpose, it epitomises the dual mandate of the professional standards body for the teaching profession” (ibid: 2).

### **Code of Professional Conduct**

Coolahan (2016: 280) describes the Teaching Council’s *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* as a ‘bedrock document’ for the profession. Under the heading ‘Standards of Teaching, Knowledge, Skill, Competence and Conduct’,

the *Code* states that ‘The role of the teacher is to educate’ and then sets out four ethical values that ‘underpin the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill, competence and conduct as set out in this Code’. These values are Respect, Care, Integrity and Trust (Teaching Council, 2016a: 8).

The *Code* then expands briefly on these values, relating them to classrooms and schools. But can the application of these values be confined within the walls of the school? We believe that adopting such values implies perspectives well beyond the school gates, especially if we take seriously the value of ‘integrity’. An intellectual and ethical integrity suggests a particular relevance for development education and, indeed, social justice teaching and learning. Further exploration reveals the four named values as akin to the tips of icebergs; great bodies of power and possibility lie beneath these surfaces.

### ***Respect***

Regarding ‘respect’, the Code states: ‘Teachers uphold human dignity and promote equality and emotional and cognitive development. In their professional practice, teachers demonstrate respect for spiritual and cultural values, diversity, social justice, freedom, democracy and the environment’ (ibid, 2016a: 6). These references resonate strongly with the language and underlying thrust of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR) (UN, 1948). It is worth recalling that, in relation to education, Article 26b of the UNDHR states:

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”.

Thus, embracing ‘respect’ in the *Code* implies at least a sympathy with and, arguably, a commitment to, the values of the UNDHR with curricular consequences.

## *Care*

Moving on to the *Code*'s expansion of the term 'Care' we find: 'Teachers' practice is motivated by the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to their care. Teachers show this through positive influence, professional judgement and empathy in practice' (2016a: 6). The key phrase here relates directly to article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) which asserts that 'In all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'. This ground-breaking treaty, which Ireland ratified in 1992, has been a major influence in legislative and policy directions over the past two decades. The UNCRC also offers 'a relevant and practical lens through which our thinking about schooling might be re-evaluated and re-energised (Jeffers, 2014: 1). The Convention's articulation of rights of survival, protection, development and participation can extend teachers' understanding of their professional role. Indeed, in our opinion, it is disappointing that the Teaching Council's *Code* does not make more explicit references to the UNCRC or suggest that teachers familiarise themselves with it and its implications for their working lives, including curricular implications and responsibilities.

## *Integrity*

Consistent behaviour, especially in terms of adhering to values such as respect and care, and living their implications, are central to a teacher's integrity. As the *Code* states: 'Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in integrity. Teachers exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions' (2016a: 6). This resonates with the premise on which Parker (1998) built his book *The Courage to Teach*: 'good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher' (Parker, 1998: 10). Thus, a commitment to promote 'understanding, tolerance and friendship' among people – human solidarity – seems core to being a teacher of integrity.

## *Trust*

As well as respect, care and integrity, a fourth value underpinning teaching is trust. 'Teachers' relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and the public are based on trust. Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty', according to the *Code* (2016a: 6). This commitment to fairness,

openness and honesty thus becomes a responsibility of all teachers and is critical for public trust in the profession. Individual failures to meet professional standards have negative implications for the teaching collective. Revelations about the misdeeds of a minority across a diverse range of professions, including residential care, the Catholic priesthood, the Gardai, journalists and international aid have, in recent years, impacted on the public's trust of many of those working in these professions. Increasingly, the public will expect teachers to demonstrate these four ethical values in their practice.

## Discussion

Reflective practice (Schön, 1983) offers an energising approach to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). Hislop (2015:3) notes 'Significant changes have been introduced into our teacher education programmes to ensure a greater emphasis on the continuum of learning from ITE to induction to CPD and on reflective practice'. Reflective practice is also a rich theme running through the Teaching Council's (2016b) *Cosán, Framework for Teachers' Learning*. This welcome attention to reflective practice in teaching should never be reduced to an inward-looking, narcissistic exercise. Brookfield's *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (1995) begins:

“We teach to change the world. The hope that undergirds our efforts to help students learn is that doing this will help them act toward each other, and towards their environment, with compassion, understanding and fairness” (Brookfield, 1995: 1).

For us, reflecting on the richness of the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*, especially the underpinning values of respect, care, integrity and trust, suggests that teaching for global citizenship, for including 'development education' as a cross curricular perspective (Quirke-Bolt and Jeffers, 2018) and for integrating education for sustainable development (ESD) are imperatives that could impact on every teacher. Currently there are glimpses of global citizenship perspectives in the primary school curriculum, the Junior Cycle programme, Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate programmes. However, curriculum application is never an exclusively top-down phenomenon; individual teachers play crucial roles in shaping what happens in their own classrooms

(Priestley, Robinson and Biesta, 2011). The possibility exists for every teacher to become a global citizenship education ‘champion’.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) offer one framework for teachers to ‘change the world’. In his portrayal of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools, Schleicher, states:

“These goals (SDGs) are a shared vision of humanity that provide the missing piece of the globalisation puzzle, the glue that can counter the centrifugal forces in the age of accelerations. The extent to which these goals will be realised will depend in no small part on what happens in today’s classrooms” (Schleicher, 2018: 227).

While easily dismissed as overly idealistic, the SDGs enable teachers to integrate key concepts such as poverty, inequality, climate justice and peace into their day-to-day practice. The SDGs 2030 target date adds an immediate relevance, even urgency, to classroom work for all age groups and can help link classroom learning with issues and actions beyond school walls. It can also bring focus to curriculum reform. The vision of the Ubuntu Network, a group committed to promoting development education in initial teacher education, captures some of the links between curriculum development and global citizenship:

“Through Development Education, the Ubuntu Network contributes to building a world based on respect for human dignity and rights and is informed by values of justice, equality, inclusion, sustainability and social responsibility” (Ubuntu Network, 2016: 9).

The Ubuntu Network’s mission is to support teacher educators to embed into their work a living understanding of and commitment to education for global citizenship, sustainable development and social justice. As a result, graduate post-primary teachers entering the workforce can integrate into their teaching, and into the schools where they work, perspectives that encourage active engagement to build a more just and sustainable world’ (ibid: 9).

## Conclusion

In an increasingly globalised world, the concept of the teacher as a global citizen makes sense as a core component of one's professional identity and an essential feature of continuing professional development. Adoption of the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* should lead to consideration of the implications of the specific ethical values of respect, care, integrity and trust in a wider global context. Specifically, central to the emerging identity of 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers should be a more explicit commitment to human rights frameworks. The UNDHR, the UNCRC and the SDGs are prime examples of frameworks that offer rich possibilities. Irish Aid and the Teaching Council have much to talk about. Indeed, we believe that this issue needs discussion beyond Irish Aid and the Teaching Council. Professional conversations involving teachers, teacher educators, teaching unions, and developments educators and focused on deepening collective understandings of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* could enhance the two key and linked concepts of teacher identity and education for global justice.

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# LATIN AMERICA IN THE SPANISH CLASSROOM: LEARNING AND TEACHING SOLIDARITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**Marina Minussi Franco and Tomás Lynch**

**Abstract:** Over the past two academic years the Latin American Solidarity Centre (LASC) has received funding from World Wise Global Schools to develop and deliver a development education (DE) project aimed at secondary school Spanish language students. The focus on the Spanish language classroom and curriculum provides unique opportunities for DE practitioners to link their work and methodologies with the learning aims and methods of L2 (Second Language) instruction. Drawing on feedback from teachers, the proposed continuation of the project in the next academic year will include an expanded focus on collective student action on topical issues that link Ireland to Latin America, and increased teacher capacity through workshops to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of DE within everyday Spanish instruction at secondary school level.

**Key words:** Development Education; Global Citizenship Education; Spanish; Post-Primary Education; Latin America; Leaving Certificate; Modern Foreign Languages; Second-Language Education.

## **Introduction**

Over the past two academic years the Latin American Solidarity Centre (LASC) has received funding from World Wise Global Schools to develop and deliver a development education (DE) project aimed at secondary school Spanish language students. The focus on the Spanish language classroom and curriculum provides unique opportunities for DE practitioners to link their work and methodologies with the learning aims and methods of L2 (Second Language) instruction. Drawing on feedback from teachers, the proposed continuation of the project in the next academic year will include an expanded focus on collective student action on topical issues that link Ireland to Latin America, and increased teacher capacity through workshops to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of DE within everyday Spanish instruction at secondary school level. This article aims to give an overview of the project over the past academic year, as well as offer observations of the challenges that arose and feedback from teachers and students.

It will also look at the options to grow and expand the project and ensure its long-term sustainability within Spanish instruction at secondary level.

### **LASC and development education**

Solidarity, defined as ‘an expression of empathy and common purpose with those in struggle for social justice, equality and genuine freedom’, (LASC, n.d.) has informed the work of the Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC) through changing contexts. Since the founding of LASC in 1996, cultural and educational activities have been central to its understanding of the forms that solidarity can take. Trócaire defines development education (DE) as:

“an active and creative educational process which aims to increase awareness and understanding of the world we live in. It should challenge perceptions and stereotypes by encouraging optimism, participation and action for a just world” (Trócaire, n.d.).

This definition of development education matches LASC’s understanding of DE as a participatory educational process that is not limited to traditional educational settings, but expands outwards to take meaningful and engaged action - solidarity, in other words - to make change in the world. For critical educationalist Paulo Freire (1985), true education is the reflection and action of the person upon the world in order to change it; the possibility of transforming the world through action.

The process of learning derives from an interpersonal dialogue. Paulo Freire (1985) proposes a fusion of the concepts of educator and educated, overcoming the contradiction between these concepts and accentuating the guarantee that both are educators and learners at the same time and always. There is no dichotomy, which gives us the proposal of a dialogical education, in which the teacher and student learn from each other. Many of these concepts from critical pedagogy inform much of LASC’s work in the development education sector. For several years now, with funding from Irish Aid, LASC has delivered an annual development education project relating to Latin America. However, what has been missing from LASC’s development education work until recently has been a sustained, direct engagement with young people in their primary places

of education and socialisation. This changed in 2017, when LASC received a grant from WorldWide Global Schools (WWGS), a formal sector programme funded by Irish Aid with a focus on the introduction and expansion of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into post-primary schools across the south of Ireland (WWGS, n.d.).

Uniquely, among all the non-government organisation (NGO)-led projects funded by WWGS, LASC's GCE project was centred on the Spanish-language classroom and curriculum, drawing on the cultural and linguistic connection with Latin America. The unique opportunities provided by incorporating DE perspectives and methodologies into language education are however not merely linked to content (cultural and linguistic links) but also to form (through the unique methodologies that relate to second-language education and acquisition).

### **Development education and the Spanish curriculum**

The 'Latin America in the Spanish Classroom' project opened the door to a broader understanding by Spanish-language students of the range of places and cultures in which the language is spoken, building a decolonial framework that decentred the default Eurocentric understanding of Spanish. All of this tied in closely to the Cultural Awareness aspect of the Spanish Senior Cycle curriculum (Department of Education and Skills, 1995), with a focus on analysing modern-day texts and on understanding everyday life in Spanish-language communities in an expansive way that refused to constrain this cultural awareness to an Iberian context.

However, the project was not limited to the Cultural Awareness aspect of the Spanish Leaving Certificate syllabus, but also touched on the two other strands of the curriculum; Basic Communicative Competency and Linguistic Awareness. For example, activities from the workshops tied in with communicative Learning Objectives such as 'engaging in discussion', as well as linguistic awareness objectives such as 'exploring meaning' (Department of Education and Skills, 1995). Many of the themes explored in the workshops were also key topics for the Spanish oral exam, including migration and borders and global warming and the climate crisis, further tying the content of the project

to the curriculum aims that are so vital to student learning in the exam-centred environment of Senior Cycle Irish state education.

The language-learning component of the workshops were not sidelined, but were an integral part of the project, with the introductory activity often centred on building or revising vocabulary relating to the theme of the workshop. Of particular interest are the educational opportunities provided by second-language (L2) learning as a site for development education. As acknowledged by Irish Aid, the skills and methodologies of development education and language learning have a significant overlap (Honan, 2012). Unlike many other subject areas, discussion and debate, content production, and learning through actions are already core elements of the Communicative Approach framework of L2 education now accepted as best practice throughout the world. This approach contrasts with the traditional Grammar Translation approach for example, where emphasis is placed less on communication, and more on students' abilities to translate content between languages.

The Communicative Approach to language education is student-centred, active-learning, with emphasis placed on students sharing their knowledge and working together – for example, by breaking into pairs or small groups for discussion-based activities - with the goal of maximising student communication time, and minimising their time spent passively listening to the teacher. As a result, many of the activities favoured by L2 teachers map neatly onto DE teaching styles. An example that highlighted the cross-over of L2 and DE teaching methodologies in both form and content, was an activity in which students were given images of Latin America and asked to describe them using keywords in Spanish, making the activity at once a student-centred vocabulary-building exercise and a DE discussion. Other activities that echoed this match-up of pedagogical aims and styles included walking debates on food sovereignty and role-plays relating to extractivism.

### **Action for Change**

Another key aspect of the project is student action. Students who participate in DE activities gain the understanding that learning does not end in the classroom, and that acting on new knowledge and understandings is as much a part of the

learning process as the discussions in the classroom. Throughout the project, student learning was constantly linked back to LASC's member-led campaigns, in particular the 'Stop Blood Coal' campaign (LASC, 2019b) against the use of coal from Colombia to power Ireland's electricity grid, making the connection between secondary school language classes, climate action, human rights, and broader civil society grassroots activism. Elsewhere, in the context of workshops on gender issues in Latin America and on women indigenous land defenders, students were encouraged to join in a (Spanish-language) Twitterstorm on the 21 February 2019 demanding exoneration for *Mapuche weichafe* (guardian/leader) Moira Millán for her part in the occupation of an Argentinian courthouse (MMIBV, 2019). Students' learning about the impacts of climate change and extractive industries on Latin American (especially indigenous) communities also brought that learning with them into their activism as part of the student Climate Strike on 15 March 2019 (O'Sullivan, 2019).

### **A decolonising of the curriculum**

Key to the project was a resource developed by LASC for teachers with DE activities related to Latin American social justice issues, all linked to learning objectives within the Spanish curriculum (LASC, 2018). This resource has been updated and refined as part of a dialogical process involving teachers, recruited to the project through outreach to ATS Ireland (Association of Teachers of Spanish), and LASC staff, with effective activities maintained and less effective ones tweaked and updated. This teachers' resource can be seen as a decolonial intervention into a Eurocentric Spanish curriculum that remains focused on Iberian culture at the expense of other Spanish language communities around the world (Ibid). In place of a focus on Spanish culture, the activities in the resource examine cultural issues, from geography to food sovereignty, in Latin America. It also includes an entire section devoted to indigenous issues, with a focus on the diversity of cultures and worldviews in Latin American indigenous communities, but also on their ongoing resistance to colonial and neo-colonial power structures. Other sections that have been developed and are available online at LASC's website include a section examining the history and legacy of slavery and Afro-descendent cultures on Latin American societies, and a section devoted specifically to colonialism that invites students to look with a different perspective at the received



history they have been taught about Columbus and other European colonial adventurers, and their impacts on indigenous communities.

These new activities and exercises further developed the links to environmental and ecological sustainability within LASC's development education work in post-primary schools. The environmental link to human security proposed by those who wished to advance the relationship between development education and Education for Sustainable Development was a key topic explored in this year's project (Hogan & Tormey, 2008: 8). Students looked at the Irish government's use of coal from Colombia, site of the Cerrejón coal mine, in its coal-fired electricity plant in Moneypoint, Co. Clare. The mine has been linked to environmental and human rights abuses, and students explored the links between the environmental degradation locally, wider climate chaos as a result of fossil fuel reliance, and the responsibility of Ireland in this case (Healy, 2018).

Development education can sometimes inadvertently contribute to racist and discriminatory ways of thinking (Bourn & McCollum, 1995: 87). Rosalind Duke (2003) has shown how much of the discourse relating to development education is a result of a legacy of colonialism and missionary evangelism, in turn reinforcing supremacist attitudes towards communities in the global South. She claims that 'true equality cannot emerge from a discourse which considers that others have not yet reached the level that we have attained, and may never do so without our help' (Duke, 2003: 203). In the same context, Alam highlights how images of individuals and communities in the global South that are published for consumption in the West tend to depict their subjects as abject and helpless, reliant on Western assistance (Alam, 2007: 59). Instead of images of drug culture or abject helplessness, images that tend to exoticise Latin American realities, and in-class discussions were prompted by images and media that show communities speaking for themselves and exercising collective power, such as photos of the protests when the communities around the Cerrejón mine successfully shut down train lines supplying the mine.

LASC also actively sought the participation of migrant communities, in particular Latin American migrant groups, in Ireland. At the end of the project,

classes that had participated in the project and received workshops were invited to attend an event on the theme of 'Latin America in Ireland', led by migrants from the Latin American community, the Immigrant Council of Ireland and Radio Latina. As well as drawing connections between the development and social issues faced by communities in Latin America, which the students had discussed in the in-school workshops, and the social issues faced by migrants in Ireland, this event provided an important intervention that re-situated migrants as activists and 'equal partners in DE and development' (Graves, 2007: 89). According to Graves 'there needs to be more genuine partnerships between long-term resident Southern and Black people and DE groups' as 'an informed perspective from Southern activists can be a meaningful contribution to DE practices and demonstrates that people are involved in their own struggles at different levels - as activists, analysts and researchers' (Graves, 2007: 89).

This can be viewed through the prism of Neal's critique of the absence of anti-racism discourse from higher education, which is also applicable to much of post-primary education in Ireland:

"Although equal opportunities discourses and policies have obtained a place on Higher [and post-primary] Education agenda[s], antiracism as a specific discourse and as a strategic approach has not...the willingness of [educational institutions] to address an equal opportunities agenda has been dependent on an institution's ability to de-politicise equality issues and approach them through a rationalist and technicist policy framework" (Neal, 1995: 18).

In place of this 'technicist framework' student participants actively brainstormed responses to racist and racialised talking points within a pointedly anti-racist framework. In an increasingly multicultural Ireland, with many schools having students from up to 50 nationalities, this focus on the experiences of migrants and people of different cultures resounded with teachers expressing surprise at how eagerly students from migrant backgrounds engaged with the content of the workshops.

## Teacher capacity-building

The scope of the project was not limited to student workshops in schools, but also involved building teacher capacity and confidence to introduce DE themes and perspectives in their Spanish teaching. Theorists and practitioners of DE have long been conscious that ‘the teacher is key’ pointing to:

“the need for professional development that builds capacity and confidence amongst teachers so that they can see the opportunities to engage in development education and have the necessary skills and knowledge to take such an approach” (Honan, 2005: 28).

This is particularly vital in L2 education. As Susanne Ehrenreich argues: ‘if we want to educate our young generation to become active citizens who are competent ‘cultural border walkers’, we need foreign language teachers who are not only linguistic but also intercultural experts’ (Ehrenreich, 2003: 161).

Apart from participating in the in-class workshops, teachers also attended two teacher training workshops in different parts of the country. As with the student workshops themselves, these trainings were learner-centred; instead of privileging the supposed expertise of the facilitator, teachers were invited to draw upon their own deep well of experiences of discussing and dealing with social justice issues in the classroom and to share their strategies with their colleagues. Many teachers from a Latin American background were in attendance who were able to give examples of how they introduced discussions of the culture and social struggles of their countries into their classrooms. Teachers brainstormed possible activities they could deliver to bring Latin American issues into the classroom, and, in what was for most the newest and most challenging aspect, discussed what kind of actions they and their students could take to turn the classroom experience into real action in the world.

The next edition of the project, in the 2019-2020 academic year, will build on the experiences and feedback from the 2018-19 project. The teacher training sessions at the beginning of the project will be followed by a teacher skillshare at the end. This final session will be a forum for teachers to discuss

and share their strategies for dealing with all the unforeseen and unexpected issues and reactions that arose during the project.

### **Challenges to the delivery of the project**

In the first year of the project (2017-2018), LASC worked with only four teachers. In the last 2018-19 academic year, however, the project rapidly expanded. LASC worked with 24 teachers in eleven different schools; a more than sixfold increase on the previous year. The increase in demand was in part the result of LASC's engagement with the Association of Teachers of Spanish in Ireland (ATS), an organisation of Spanish subject teachers. LASC representatives attended the ATS AGM in October 2018, and used the event to outreach to Spanish teachers. More and more teachers contacted LASC during the course of the project, to the extent that the full series of six workshops could not be delivered to all of the teachers who approached LASC. This was a clear sign of the demand among Spanish teachers for engaging DE material and methodologies that broaden students' awareness of the cultural basis of the language beyond just Spain. This is reflective of an increasingly diverse and global Irish society. For example, many teachers who participated in (or wished to participate in) the project were Latin American migrants themselves, or Irish people who had travelled or lived in Latin America, and who wished to bring their experiences to their students. In total, during the course of the year, almost 500 students participated in LASC workshops or other activities in the course of 104 workshops with 19 Transition Year groups and six 5th Year groups.

In the context of building teacher capacity, it is clear that 'teachers cannot tackle the preconceptions which students bring to class unless they have themselves analysed and become aware of the power of the discourse they use' (Duke, 2003: 210). A major issue raised by teachers through feedback mechanisms after the project was how to deal with students who have opinions that might be considered 'wrong', without belittling their opinions. One teacher wrote on the feedback form that 'sometimes it's difficult to hear some opinions without you feeling you have to explain the "right" way of thinking. It's a fine balance between some of the "silly" things student's might think or have heard from home without insulting them or belittling their voice'. Building the capacity and confidence of teachers not only to introduce GCE themes into their language

education, but also to meaningfully engage with student doubts and criticisms - in a way that doesn't unconsciously enforce their own biases and preconceptions - will have to be a key part of teacher capacity building in future editions of the project.

Fitting the project around the tight timetables and exam-oriented focus of Senior Cycle Spanish teachers was a further challenge. This was a major issue identified as a challenge in teacher feedback forms: 'I found it hard to fit into an already busy schedule with my 5th years and spend the time it merits with my classes'. In the Irish educational system, and in particular in the Senior Cycle leading up to the Leaving Certificate in 6th (final year) many teachers and students are very focused on teaching (and learning) to take the test. Many teachers who approached LASC to participate in the project sought the workshops primarily for their Transition Year students, with fewer teachers willing to use up precious exam preparation time in 5th and 6th year that could instead be devoted to covering and revising Leaving Certificate course content.

A crucial aim of the project was to overcome these misgivings by making clear to teachers how the topics discussed and the activities undertaken in the workshops could be related to specific curriculum learning objectives. Time spent in the workshops should also be seen as time spent covering curriculum linguistic objectives, rather than a completely separate, extra-curricular activity. Nonetheless, an important goal for the project going forward is to more closely integrate the GCE and curricular goals of the project, and to make sure that both teachers and students see the workshops as an integrated part of normal curriculum learning, rather than as a break from regular educational activity.

While incorporating development education into language teaching offers unique educational opportunities relating to the overlap of techniques associated with both areas of education, delivering GCE through what was for most students a foreign language also brought with it some major obstacles. One of the key drawbacks was that many students, although well aware of many of the issues, and quite capable of discussing them and voice their opinions on them in English in their History, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), or Business Studies classes, lacked both the level and the confidence to discuss them in

Spanish. A key challenge, made more difficult by the short duration of the project in schools, was building up students' confidence to attempt to articulate their own ideas about the topic in Spanish, rather than merely describing an issue or an image.

### **Individualism v collectivism**

Society at large and the education system in particular, tend to view solutions and responses to problems in individualistic terms. For example, in response to climate change and environmental degradation, students are often encouraged to take highly individualised forms of action, for example keeping a log of their personal recycling habits. From LASC's perspective, a key aspect of development education is to encourage *collective* modes of action as well as of learning. Breaking the habit of thinking, in which only individual actions are recognised was a key aspect of the project this year. In thinking about what forms of action they could take, students were encouraged not only to think of individual actions, but also actions they could take as a class, a school, a community, and as a nation. Examples of school actions included taking control of school social media for a day to raise awareness, and examples of community actions were organising a protest at local county council offices. Fostering the development of students who see themselves not only as agents of change, but as *collective* agents of *collective* change, is crucial to building the kind of skills and attitudes essential to meaningful and effective global citizenship.

The key problematic at the heart of LASC's work, including its DE work, has always been 'Solidarity'. The question of how to encourage and empower people not directly affected by distant issues, to take action in solidarity with communities far away from them, who may never even know about the actions they have taken, has been central to our work through the years. Unlike many other DE projects in schools, which relate directly to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and which can be linked to local issues that students can take action on, LASC's project was specifically centred on issues in Latin America (UN, 2015). As a result, a key challenge was finding forms of action students could take that felt relevant to their lives and the issues they were facing in their own communities, and also meaningful and effective to the communities affected by the issues in question.

In 2019-20, LASC plans to make our ongoing campaign against Ireland's continued purchase of coal for electricity production from the Cerrejón mine in Colombia our primary focus when discussing possible actions students can take with students and teachers. This issue, which very clearly links everyday activity - the use of electricity - with a major environmental and human rights issue in Latin America, gives a clear direction for student action in terms of lobbying the Irish government and protesting their policy of buying coal from Cerrejón.

### **Conclusion and the future**

Unique educational opportunities are provided by integrating DE into language instruction. The overlap in methodologies between the communicative approach to second-language teaching and the active learning methodologies central to DE create a space where DE might be smoothly incorporated into the teaching styles of language teachers, even teachers who might have been unfamiliar with DE or its methodologies until recently. Language education is an area in which outreach to teachers in Ireland has been neglected by DE practitioners in Ireland for quite some time, but, as the huge demand from Spanish teachers to participate in LASC's DE project of teacher training sessions and classroom workshops this year demonstrates, MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) teachers are eager to find ways to incorporate new and alternative themes and viewpoints into their instruction. Despite inexperience and unfamiliarity with DE in many cases, teachers saw the value of it to their students and were quickly able to understand and apply its methodologies.

Depending on ongoing funding from World Wise Global Schools, LASC plans to continue developing and expanding this project over the coming years. Crucial to future editions of the project will be an increased focus on action, one of the four key aspects of DE. Action, as the element that transforms our learning from passive to active, and our responses to it from charity into meaningful solidarity, is crucial to the theory and practice of DE. It is through action that our learning gains meaning to us, that we test the ideas we have encountered, and it is through our reflection on our actions that our learning continues. A key part of DE or GCE (Global Citizenship Education) is empowering students to see themselves as active global citizens, active agents in a

global society whose actions can have an effect on the world. Overcoming the alienation that many students express from power - the power to make change, to make those with authority listen to them - is one of the key objectives of DE in this context.

Another key aspect of future editions of the project will be an expansion of teacher capacity building to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project, and its aims and methodologies, within Spanish language education at secondary level. The necessity of a follow-up continuing professional development (CPD) session for teachers has been a thread that has run through the entirety of this reflection - as a collaborative learner-led forum for teachers to reflect on how the project went in their classrooms and its results, and to discuss problems that arose and the strategies they used to overcome them. The concept of 'solidarity', particularly collective forms of solidarity, and the question of how to act in solidarity with people affected by distant issues that are removed from our own lives is key to much of DE and to LASC's project in particular. As such, finding issues that cross national boundaries and geographical distance is essential to providing students with a focus for meaningful actions. LASC's campaign against the Irish government's policy of buying coal from the notorious Cerrejón mine in Colombia provides an ideal focus for student actions that brings together the local and the international on an issue that combines both environmental and human rights abuses.

To encourage students to reflect on their actions and its results, LASC will host an event for students in Dublin at the end of 2019. As well as providing a forum for representatives of Latin American migrant organisations to share their experiences with students and make connections between social and development issues faced by communities in distant countries with those faced by marginalised communities in Ireland, this event will also invite a group of students from each class to present their action project to their peers. This will give students and teachers from different schools an opportunity to learn from the experiences of their counterparts in other schools, and ensure that the experience and knowledge gained through the project don't remain isolated in separate schools, but are shared out among all, and will add to students' sense of themselves not as isolated actors, but as active agents within a network of action for change.



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# Viewpoint

## Why the Migrant ‘Crisis’ is an Opportunity: Remittances, Aid and Global Responsibility

Niamh Gaynor

**Abstract:** Remittances are now more than three times larger than aid flows to countries in the global South and constitute a rapidly growing source of development finance. Yet barriers to both entry and the right to work within Northern countries mean that their full potential is not being realised, with refugees and migrants from many Southern countries meeting significant blockages in their efforts to build new lives and livelihoods in their new homes. In this Viewpoint, I argue that we, as development educators, need to challenge and question the inconsistencies and hypocrisy underpinning national and international attitudes and policies which purport to assist Southern people through aid programmes, yet restrict these same people’s agency to seek employment elsewhere and assist their home communities directly. If handled justly and more openly, the so-called migrant ‘crisis’ represents an opportunity to move away from patronising charity stereotypes which perpetuate Northern ‘saviour complexes’ to more equitable, economically sustainable relationships North and South.

**Key words:** Overseas Development Aid; Sustainable Development Goals; Remittances; Migration; Refugees; Direct Provision; Burundi.

### Introduction

Recent years have seen a sharp increase in the level of global remittances to the global South, from \$123 billion in 2000, to \$351 billion in 2012 (OECD, 2014: 123), to a record \$529 billion in 2018 (World Bank, 2019a: 1). By 2024, the World Bank estimates that remittances will be larger than aid and foreign direct investment combined, constituting the largest source of development finance for Southern countries, surpassing 25 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for some. As the Bank notes, ‘Remittances are on track to become the most

important game in town when it comes to financing development’ (Barne and Pilea, 2019). While certainly not a panacea for poverty reduction and global justice, remittances can and are assisting individuals and communities in real, tangible ways. Yet, as political sensitivities in the global North heighten over immigration, their full potential is not being realised.

At the same time, aid to the global South is falling. It fell by 3 percent last year, with humanitarian aid falling by 8 percent (OECD, 2019a). Yet the development sector remains focused on aid as a seemingly sole source of development finance, even though other sources are growing. In this Viewpoint, I argue that we, as development educators, need to challenge and question the inconsistencies and hypocrisy underpinning national and international attitudes and policies which purport to assist Southern people through aid programmes, yet restrict these same people’s agency to seek employment elsewhere and assist their home communities directly. As the Head of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) recently noted, we live in ‘an age of egotism’ in the global North which is dominated by ‘me first, we first, our country first policies and closing minds’ (*The Irish Times*, 2019). The framing of the European migrant ‘crisis’ is an excellent example of such a ‘me first, we first’ attitude. The ‘crisis’ is repeatedly presented as a crisis for Europe although, from the horrific and harrowing stories of migrants themselves, it is clear that the real crises are in their own homes and communities. If handled justly and more openly, the so-called migrant ‘crisis’ offers a real opportunity to shift the global economic and political balance and to move towards more equitable, economically sustainable relationships North and South. I develop my argument as follows.

In the next section, while acknowledging the important gains of international aid in specific, targeted areas, I focus in particular on its limitations and shortcomings, both in the global South and, most particularly in the global North with respect to Southern agency and choice. I then go on to examine the usefulness of remittances as a complementary source of finance, focusing in particular on Ireland’s poor record in this regard. I challenge development educators to look beyond the aid model and to critically engage with the inconsistencies and hypocrisy underpinning national and international attitudes and policies with respect to migration and remittances. In the final section, I take

the case of Burundi, a largely neglected country in Central Africa whose people have experienced decades of displacement and re-displacement. The Burundi case exemplifies the hypocrisy of the global system in relation to aid and migration in three respects – the failure of aid to address the root causes of internal conflict (while publicly declaring ‘success’); an abdication of global responsibility in the context of the ensuing refugee crisis; and the attendant persistence of poverty and insecurity as Burundians are denied access to employment opportunities in the global North. I conclude by arguing that the days of white saviours are over, and that the global North has a responsibility to move to a more open and equitable approach to migrants and asylum seekers. For our part, we, as development educators, need to critically engage with wider debates on the limitations of the international aid model, raising questions and challenging the inconsistencies and hypocrisy in the face of alternative models, including migration and remittances.

### **Aid, agency and choice**

Much energy and resources have been expended within the development sector in lobbying and advocating for the 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) target as agreed within the United Nations in 1970. Yet, despite targeted gains in specific areas, the broader limitations of aid as a means towards global development and justice have been known for some time (see, for example de Haan, 2009; Hunt, 2012). Aid can contribute to some people’s livelihoods, but it cannot provide jobs for all. It can assist in the development and provision of health and education services in certain instances, but it cannot support and sustain effective and accessible national systems. It can promote good governance, but it cannot democratically hold governments to account. It can assist in rebuilding communities and societies following humanitarian disasters and/or conflict, but it cannot address all their root causes. Crucially, as the last ten years have shown us, it cannot be relied on to be sustained in times of economic downturn. Indeed, in a context where aid inflows lag far behind financial outflows, there is little aid can do to stem the outflow of wealth and exploitation of the global South. Although, in 2015, African countries received around \$19 billion in aid, over three times that much (\$68 billion) was taken out in capital flight, mainly by multinational companies deliberately misreporting the value of their imports or exports to reduce tax (Honest Accounts, 2017: 2).

As we also now know, although well-meaning, when misplaced or poorly implemented, aid can also do damage. It can bankroll strong dictators and it can fuel corruption (Moyo, 2009). It can exacerbate inequalities between and within communities (de Haan, 2009: 106). And, when reverting to a 'one-size-fits-all' hierarchical model of development, it can ultimately fail to identify or address the real underlying issues, resulting in growing poverty, inequality, marginalisation, insecurity and, in many cases, violence (Easterly, 2006). Indeed, the jury is still out on whether aid can or does assist in reducing poverty and inequalities in the global South. While poverty and inequality has been decreasing in some parts of the world, in others – notably in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) – it has grown. According to a recent World Bank report, the number of people living in poverty (defined as less than \$1.90 per day at 2011 levels) in the SSA region grew from 278 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015 (World Bank, 2018). When the definition is widened to include education, access to basic utilities, healthcare and security, this level rises even further.

Aid, or more specifically, the international aid community, also impacts at a less tangible, relational level in a manner which can be, and indeed often is, quite damaging and demeaning to individuals, communities and states of the global South (Escobar, 1995). The international aid community's tenacious adherence to modernist ideas of linearity in the trajectory from 'undeveloped' to 'developing' to 'developed', coupled with its myopic understanding of the global, structural causes of underdevelopment fuels the stubborn persistence of a charity approach to global inequality (see for example Simpson's findings on perceptions among educators at primary and secondary level in the UK (Simpson, 2017)). There are three main consequences to this. First, obstacles to development and equality are identified as internal – characteristics of 'undeveloped' or, more optimistically, 'developing' countries themselves, as opposed to broader structural constraints, or indeed, failures or shortcomings on the part of the international aid community and its interventions. The South is the problem, not the North. Second, the agency of Southern actors (state and civil society) in addressing these obstacles is largely negated as Southern actors are generally represented as constituting their principal architects. Third and related, it therefore falls to Northern actors and institutions – i.e. the international community – to intervene and assist, thus laying the foundation and rationale for the aid industry. The

language of the aid community is replete with such ideology. To take an example, in a commentary on the World Bank's recent poverty report cited above, Nirav Patel of the Brookings Institute notes 'the remarkable progress the world has achieved toward ending extreme poverty' (Patel, 2018: 20 - emphasis added), yet goes on to speak of 'sub-Saharan Africa's much slower fight against poverty'. Successes are attributed to the international community, while failures are the global South's alone. While development education plays an important role in challenging these framings and stereotypes, evidence suggests that more needs to be done (Oberman and Waldron, 2017). This Northern saviour complex is not just damaging and demeaning to Southern actors and communities, it also masks the shortcomings and errors of Northern actors and institutions. This, in turn, negates their complicity in the production and reproduction of global inequality, thereby negating their responsibilities to address it.

In short, aid, while certainly beneficial in targeted areas, is not without its problems. Yet it is important to note that it is not the only show in town. At the same time as aid flows dwindle and stagnate, remittances have been increasing at a rapid rate. The World Bank estimates that there are now 270 million migrants working around the world who will send a combined \$698 billion back home in 2019 (World Bank, 2019a). This is over three times the volume of total aid flows in the same year. Yet, as we will see below, there is potential for much more if Northern countries move beyond a 'me first' attitude and embrace their global responsibilities and obligations.

### **Migration, remittances and glass ceilings**

The World Bank reports that the worldwide number of international migrants has been increasing steadily from a level of 18 million in 2010 to 270 million in 2019 (2019a: 9). Included in these figures are asylum seekers and refugees. By mid-2018, the global stock of refugees recorded by the UNHCR reached 20.2 million (Ibid). However, despite European proclamations of a migration 'crisis', countries in the global South have historically and continue to host by far the largest share of refugees. This was around 85 percent of the global total in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018). Meanwhile, the approval rate for asylum applications in the European Union (EU) has been falling – from 46 percent in 2017 to 37 percent in 2018. With a total stock of over 870,000 pending asylum applications at the



end of 2018 and also considering detected undocumented economic migrants, the World Bank (2019a: 11) estimates that the number of migrants refused entry into EU countries in 2018 at over 6 million. The growing anti-immigration sentiment in many European countries is clearly having an influence. Although in December 2018, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly voted to formally adopt a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration as a step toward managing migration in a more humane and orderly manner, the withdrawal of several countries (mostly from within the EU) from this is indicative of heightened political sensitivities toward immigration (Desmond, 2018).

Migrant remittances play an important role in development in many Southern countries, amounting to over 25 percent of some country's annual GDP (for example, Haiti, Nepal, Tonga and Tajikistan) (World Bank, 2019a: 3). As well as assisting families and communities to purchase necessities such as food, clothing and housing, these direct flows can also help in the development of livelihoods and businesses. Yet remittances to some of the world's poorest countries, notably those in SSA, are much lower. At the high end, remittances to some SSA countries amount to between 7 and 15 percent of GDP (the top five are: The Gambia at 15.3 per cent of GDP; Liberia at 12 percent; Senegal at 9.1 per cent; Ghana at 7.3 percent; and Nigeria 6.1 at percent) (World Bank, 2019a: 23). However, some of the continent's poorest countries such as Burundi receive less than 1 per cent of GDP, as the vast majority of Burundian migrants live in neighbouring countries where employment opportunities are limited (World Bank, 2019b).

Despite its positive reputation for its celebrated aid programme and international peacekeeping operations abroad, Ireland's welcome for migrants and asylum seekers at home leaves a lot to be desired. A survey of over 1,000 migrants in 2006 found that 32 percent of work permit holders have experienced racist harassment at work, while 21 percent of those entitled to work reported discrimination in accessing employment. This is most common among Africans. 18 percent of those who had contact with immigration services reported that they were badly treated (ESRI, 2006). Ireland's treatment of migrants seeking asylum has long been a source of justifiable criticism. An analysis of UNHCR (2019a) data shows that Ireland ranks poorly among European nations for its treatment

of asylum-seekers over the last seven years in several respects. Ireland has recognised fewer asylum claims than many smaller or similar sized countries since 2012 and ranks 55<sup>th</sup> out of 183 countries overall, recognising asylum claims in 677 cases since 2012.

Crucially, just 3 percent of asylum applications have been recognised over this period; 21 percent have been rejected; and a staggering 76 percent of applicants have either been left waiting or their cases have been closed, without either recognition or rejection. While waiting, under the country's much criticised system of Direct Provision, (see IHREC, 2014 and NASC, 2019 for comprehensive critiques of Direct Provision), asylum seekers receive just €29.80 a week for children and €38.80 for adults. No travel pass is provided, and the state provides no investment in early legal advice. A Working Group Report from the Irish Refugee Council (IRC, 2015) which interviewed people living within Ireland's asylum process found that this length of time left in limbo waiting to hear the outcome constitutes the biggest stress for many. Specific stresses cited by asylum seekers in this regard include: the uncertainty; the lack of personal autonomy over the most basic aspects of their lives – cooking, going to the shops, cleaning; the lack of privacy within Direct Provision accommodation, and the challenges of sharing with strangers; boredom and isolation; and the loss of employment skills and the creation of dependency. In a recent parliamentary committee debate on Direct Provision, it was reported that these conditions have deteriorated further (Oireachtas, 2019). Moreover, although a work permit was introduced in 2018 following a Supreme Court ruling, this is valid for just 6 months and comes with many restrictions which act as a major disincentive for potential employers. Consequently, as of May 2018, of the 1,500 asylum seekers who were granted permits, just 350 were able to find work (Ibid).

Thus, while displaying a generosity and willingness to assist people from the global South once they stay at home, Ireland, like many other Northern countries, proves far less magnanimous towards migrants taking the difficult and sometimes necessary choice to leave and assist their countries themselves. A glass ceiling exists and, as political sensitivities toward immigration heighten, the ceiling is turning to concrete. This fundamental hypocrisy in relation to aid, migration and asylum seekers is exemplified in the case of Burundi discussed below.

### **Burundi: A case of global hypocrisy**

Burundi is a small landlocked country in Central Africa. With a per capita GNI of just US\$702 and the Human Development Index ranking of 185 (out of 189 countries), it ranks as one of the poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2018). Since attaining independence from Belgium in 1962, the country has been plagued by internal conflict and violence as different political actors mobilise for power and control over the country's resources. This has resulted in successive waves of displacement and re-displacement, the most recent of which has been taking place over the last four years since the sitting president's controversial decision to seek a third term in office in 2015 which was deemed unconstitutional by his political opponents.

Burundi exemplifies the hypocrisy of the global North in relation to aid and migration in three respects. First, aid has largely failed Burundi. This is because the international aid community, in conjunction with local actors, failed to address the root causes of internal conflict. Although peace negotiations, held in Arusha, Tanzania, were widely declared a 'success' (see Campbell, 2015), ongoing reports of political intimidation in the years that followed (Gaynor, 2014), and the overt insecurity and violence that has characterised the last four years (Human Rights Watch, 2019; UNHCR, 2019b), indicate a profound failure in aid efforts from 2000 forward. According to analysts, this failure was due to the aid community's focus on high level politics while ignoring local concerns (Curtis, 2013; Gaynor, 2014); underfunding and poor implementation of the security sector reform process (Grauvogel, 2016); and a lack of support for returning refugees (Purdeková, 2016). As in the case of neighbouring Rwanda (see Reyntjens, 2008; Beswick, 2010; Gaynor, 2016), the international community's need for a success story dominated international narratives and strategy around the Burundian process from 2000 forward. As Campbell (cited in Grauvogel, 2016: 8) notes: 'in the wake of the "unexpected success of Arusha", the international community, and especially Western donors, ignored the negative patterns that became visible from 2006 onwards'.

Second, although partially responsible for the current crisis, the global North is unwilling to shoulder its proportion of the burden. Although Burundi ranks as one of the poorest countries in the world, Burundian migrants are largely

denied access to employment opportunities in the global North. During the last four years, over 400,000 people have fled the country. Over half have been welcomed in the neighbouring country of Tanzania, while Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Uganda have hosted 72,612, 45,447 and 42,334 respectively (UNHCR, 2019c). International migration figures are significantly lower, registering in the hundreds per annum in contrast to regional figures. Canada, the United States, Belgium and France are the main Northern recipient countries. Ireland has accepted no Burundian refugees since 2000 (OECD, 2019b). Refugees in Tanzania are not allowed to work (Lukunka, 2011), and employment opportunities in other neighbouring countries are limited. Thus, opportunities to directly assist families and communities at home through remittances are minimal. This explains why Burundi's remittances account for less than 1 percent of its GDP (World Bank, 2019b).

Third, the global North appears unwilling to assist both internally displaced people and migrants and refugees in Burundi's neighbouring countries. According to the UNHCR, the Burundian refugee crisis was the least funded internationally in 2018. In 2019, there has been a shortfall of 78 percent in the required funding, with just US\$64 million of the \$293 million required secured (UNHCR, 2019d). This acute shortfall in international support means that regional borders are now closing and options to leave are becoming more and more difficult. Refugees are no longer being granted refugee status on a *prima facie* basis in Tanzania, Uganda, and the DRC (UNHCR, 2019c). Meanwhile, for those living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, conditions are very poor. Widespread overcrowding and cholera are reported. More recently, the situation of refugees in Tanzanian camps has worsened considerably with the announcement of forced repatriation after 1 October 2019. The Tanzanian government states that, in the face of broken promises of funding and support from the international community, it can no longer afford to host refugees (Ross, 2019). While both the Tanzanian and Burundian governments claim that conditions in Burundi have now stabilised, refugees fear otherwise. As one anonymous refugee, speaking to the BBC suggested, 'It's very unfortunate. What have the international community or Tanzania done to stop Nkurunziza's government from persecuting people? There are killings, abductions and dead bodies found later. They are pushing us back to be killed' (Ibid).

As a political stalemate continues between regional governments and international agencies over who is responsible and who should take action, displaced households are left in limbo, living in deplorable conditions and under a threat of forced repatriation. This international failure to adequately respond to the political and humanitarian crisis is both irresponsible and untenable given the abject failure of internationally sanctioned, and internationally acclaimed, efforts at aid and peacebuilding in Burundi. The Burundi case exemplifies the global North's fundamental hypocrisy in relation to aid, migration and asylum seekers.

## **Conclusion**

There will always be a place for aid in global efforts to secure greater equality and justice. Yet its limitations and, where applicable, the damage caused by inappropriate (although often well meaning) initiatives needs to be publicly acknowledged. The agency and capacity of Southern actors to actively engage in their own and their country's development also needs to be acknowledged and supported. The days of the white saviour are over. Complementary mechanisms of development finance need to be explored. Yet the development sector largely chooses to ignore them. For example, while Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refers to policies for 'safe and orderly migration', nothing is said about opening borders and increasing employment opportunities in the global North so that migrants can help themselves and their families (UN, 2019: 13). While Goal 17 makes references to remittances as a support in implementing the SDGs, no link is made to the barriers and obstacles facing migrants in the global North (UN, 2019: 56). Indeed, the wider shortcomings of the SDGs in addressing global poverty and inequality are discussed elsewhere in this issue (McCloskey, 2019).

As aid flows dwindle and stagnate, and as the international community chooses to ignore its responsibilities and obligations at home towards particular communities and people, we, as development educators, need to challenge and question the inconsistencies and hypocrisy underpinning aid and migration attitudes and policies. We need to be at the forefront in calls for complementary and alternative mechanisms of development finance which afford greater agency and support to Southern people seeking employment and livelihoods elsewhere.

This means overtly challenging the incipient racism and ‘me-first-ism’ which permeates public discourse and attitudes towards migrants. Opening our borders and labour markets to incoming migrants provides one mechanism which can go some way towards redressing the global imbalance of power and resources.

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# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, NEOLIBERALISM AND NGOs: IT'S TIME TO PURSUE A TRANSFORMATIVE PATH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

STEPHEN MCCLOSKEY

**Abstract:** This article argues that two recent reports on food security and education call into question the technical and managerial development process set in motion by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It suggests that the goals can't succeed as long as they are fatally hitched to the broken neoliberal paradigm of development which is resulting in wealth concentration in fewer hands and growing social polarisation. The article encourages non-governmental organisations to broaden their policy ambit toward a more political and transformative agenda that directly addresses the fundamental causes of inequality and injustice. Clinging to the aid agenda and the SDGs is unlikely to alter the neoliberal trajectory on which we are set toward more social fragmentation and political authoritarianism.

**Key words:** Sustainable Development Goals; Neoliberalism; Non-Governmental Organisations; Aid; Development Policy; Social Transformation.

## Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNDP, 2019) were adopted in 2015 by the United Nations and its member states as an ambitious programme 'to promote shared prosperity and well-being for all over the next 15 years' (UN, 2015). Four years into their delivery, two reports in as many weeks have cast serious doubt on the efficacy and intended outcomes of the SDGs. These reports not only indicate that two key goals – food security (WHO, 2019) and inclusive education (UNESCO, 2019) - are significantly off-track and unlikely to be achieved by 2030, but more fundamentally question the development process that the Global Goals represent. This debate around the goals goes to the heart of contemporary international development delivery. Does it remain a largely technical, managerial and depoliticised discourse on aid or does it widen its ambit for debate into the need for systemic change and political influence addressing the root causes of economic inequality? It is difficult to anticipate a scenario where

the managerial path alone, which the SDGs appear to represent, will provide the transformative change needed to achieve poverty eradication. The damaging reports on food security and education appear to underline this view.

### **Food security and education**

The first report on food security from a UN multi-agency taskforce has found that 820 million people worldwide are still going hungry and argues that reaching the target of zero hunger by 2030 is ‘an immense challenge’ (WHO, 2019). SDG 2 (2015) aims to ‘End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture’ but the report finds that ‘The pace of progress in halving the number of children who are stunted and in reducing the number of babies born with low birth weight is too slow’ (WHO, 2019). Moreover, the number of children overweight and obese – indicators of malnourishment – continues ‘to increase in all regions, particularly among school-age children and adults’ (Ibid). And in suggesting difficulties in achieving SDG 5 (2015) on gender equality, the report states that ‘The chances of being food insecure are higher for women than men in every continent, with the largest gap in Latin America’ (WHO, 2019).

The second recent report showing the SDGs to be off-track, was published by UNESCO on the key area of education. It finds that ‘one in six 6 to 17-year-olds will still be excluded [from school] in 2030’ (UNESCO, 2019). It goes on to suggest that ‘40% of children worldwide will fail to complete secondary education, a figure that is forecast to reach 50% in sub-Saharan Africa where the proportion of trained teachers has been declining since 2000’ (Ibid). SDG 4 (2015) aims to ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. However, a 2017-18 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report found that the education share of total aid fell for six consecutive years, from 10% in 2009 to 6.9% in 2015 (UNESCO, 2017: xvii). Helen Clarke, the former prime minister of New Zealand and chair of the Global Education Monitoring Report advisory board said that world leaders ‘had a lot to answer for’ in letting education slip ‘down the aid agenda’ (Lamble, 2019). In voicing her concern about ‘complacency’ among countries regarding the education target, Clarke added that lack of progress toward SDG 4 had ‘worrying implications for the whole 2030 agenda on sustainable development’ (Ibid).

## **Aid is not enough**

While Helen Clarke bemoans the lack of aid and collective commitment of nation states as the chief impediments to SDG delivery, it is doubtful that increasing development assistance to countries in the global South alone will eradicate stubborn levels of poverty. For example, Hickle reported in 2017 that ‘for every \$1 of aid that developing countries receive, they lose \$24 in net outflows’. Most of the outflows represent the illicit flow of capital from the global South to the North as a result of the use of tax havens or the reporting of false prices on trade invoices. The World Bank (2017) has defined illicit flows as ‘Money illegally earned, transferred, or used that crosses borders’ and argues that they ‘reduce domestic resources and tax revenue needed to fund poverty-reducing programs and infrastructure in developing countries’. Aid also pales alongside the remittances sent by migrants working abroad back home to countries in the global South. The World Bank (2019) reported that remittances reached a record high of \$689 billion in 2018 which is nearly four times the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-estimated total of official donor assistance in 2018 of \$153 billion, a drop of 2.7 percent on 2017 (OECD, 2019).

But the full scale of global inequality and the limitations of development aid were starkly revealed in an Oxfam report (2019) showing the wealth of the world’s billionaires to have increased by \$900 billion in 2018 alone while the wealth of the poorest half of humanity fell by 11 percent (Oxfam, 2019: 11). The report also showed that wealth is becoming more concentrated with 26 billionaires controlling the same wealth as the bottom half of humanity (Ibid). But what is ignored by the standard economic measurement of development, Gross National Product (GNP), is the unpaid work of millions of women across the world which Oxfam estimates annually at \$10 trillion, a sum 43 times greater than the annual turnover of the transnational giant, Apple (Ibid).

Oxfam’s report indicates that the main driver of gender inequality, social injustice and wealth concentration is neoliberalism:

“Our economic rules have been written by rich and powerful men in their own interests. The neo-liberal economic model of today has made

this worse – cuts to public services, cuts to taxes for the richest individuals and corporations, and a race to the bottom on wages have all hurt women more than men” (Oxfam, 2019: 14).

### **SDGs and Neoliberalism**

There appears to be a lack of critical engagement in the international development sector with the SDGs and their capacity to impose meaningful change on a dangerously deregulated neoliberal economic system. However, an academic study carried out in the Valencian autonomous region in Spain considered whether the SDGs can address structural problems in development aid policies and practices, ‘such as the lack of accountability and coherence, unequal power relations, or depoliticisation’ (Belda-Miguel et al, 2019: 1). The study found that:

“the SDGs do not overcome the depoliticisation of aid discourses and policies as they still frame development problems as technical, managerial and measurable problems. For example, issues of power and key political issues such as redistribution are totally absent from the Agenda” (Belda-Miguel et al, 2019: 2).

The international development sector appears reluctant to leave the policy comfort zone of overseas development assistance and become more politically engaged with the structural causes of poverty. As John Hilary, former director of War on Want, said: ‘Over the past two decades, a highly professionalised NGO sector has increasingly moved to identify international development with overseas aid, despite the numerous critiques of such an elision from the majority world itself’ (Hilary, 2013: 11). The SDGs appear to be locked in a similar managerialist and technical approach to development with the Valencian study suggesting that:

“Despite the references to structural issues, the new global agenda has been criticised for reproducing the status quo and for not addressing the causes of impoverishment created by the existing dominant capitalist and developmentalist model” (Belda-Miguel et al, 2019: 2).

While the Goals recognise the importance of climate action with SDG 13 (2015) calling for ‘urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts’, SDG 8 (2015) calls for ‘sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth’. How do the goals square the circle of combating climate change while enabling poor and middle-income countries to higher levels of growth with the enhanced global consumption of carbon which that implies? The goals seem to be fatally hitched to the same tried and failed economic system that created climate change, global inequality and social polarisation in the first place. It seems certain that until this nettle is grasped by international development NGOs and they start working with unity and purpose toward a more heavily regulated economic system that supports progressive taxation, properly funded public services and decent wages, then the social fragmentation suggested by Brexit and the election of Donald Trump will continue (McCloskey, 2017).

In Ireland, a study by Kleibl and Munck (2018) argued that ‘there is a shared discourse across the government, NGO and academic sectors which does not really encourage critical enquiry’ (2018: 2). However, in light of the safeguarding crisis which has enveloped Oxfam (Charity Commission, 2019) and has since impacted on other NGOs in the development sector, they argue now is the time for ‘honest self-reflection’ and propose ‘a carefully crafted and openly debated research project’ to consider the role of NGOs as agents of development (Kleibl and Munck, 2018: 22). This debate appears to be overdue, particularly as the development process to which so many NGOs have imbued with their social capital and policy formation – the Sustainable Development Goals – is already sending out signals of distress.

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# Resource reviews

## *AGAINST COLONIZATION AND RURAL DISPOSSESSION: LOCAL RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AND EAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC AND AFRICA*

REVIEW BY TERRY DUNNE

Kapoor, D (2017) *Against Colonization and Rural Dispossession: Local Resistance in South and East Asia, the Pacific and Africa*, London: Zed Books.

This book is essentially a collection of case studies of rural social movement activity, or of more amorphous resistance, in opposition to dispossession. The editorial introduction strongly makes the case for ‘recognizing the primacy of the activism of those directly affected’ (6). That said, there is a recognition in some of the case studies that the role of inter/transnational actors, such as human rights activists, has been significant (9–10). Ibreck, in a chapter on agri-business projects in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia, makes the same point arguing that challenging land grabs ‘depends largely upon specific understandings and actual practices at the sites of investment’ (251). This appreciation is perhaps where the book is most useful to development education professionals, particularly in view of the fact that in some of the instances detailed, global solidarity is important. This was the case, for example, in Rodriguez’s chapter on Lumad opposition to mining in the Philippines (154–155; 158–161). On the other hand, it is similarly worth noting, too, the role of non-government organisation (NGO)-based humanitarian reconstruction assistance as an agency of dispossession, in helping to dispossess artisan fishing communities in Tamil Nadu, in the wake of the 2004 tsunami (Swamy & Revathi 122–144).

A number of the studies are exemplary in their understanding of social movement formation as a struggle for unity among heterogeneous social groups and in the empirical detail they proffer on this process. One of the strongest chapters is that by Naidoo, Klerck and Helliker on the farm workers’, farm dwellers’ and small farmers’ movement in Eastern Cape, South Africa. The pre-history of the social movement organisation they focus on, which is called

*Phakamani Siyephambili* (rise up and move forward), begins with local farm committees, which, unlike conventional trade unions, brought together workers and dwellers (195–196). The latter are disproportionately female and are either not employed on a standard contract (and likely under-employed, at least as regards formal employment), or not employed on the farm upon which they reside but possessing residential rights there. Similarly, the organisational structure was modified in particular areas to include seasonal migrant labourers (197). As well as this the organisation also includes some small farmers, most of whom are ex-workers who acquired land under recent land reform programmes (197). Brownhill, Kaara and Turner’s study of local organic food production in Kenya likewise highlights its inter-generational and cross-gender basis (218-219).

The ‘struggle to unify’ (231) identified by Langdon and Larweh among the people of Ada, Ghana, is complicated by the fact that the local elite are involved in efforts to privatise local salt lagoons. Central there has been the creation of ‘an open space of dialogue’ (244), through various means from tapestries to community radio, in opposition to secretive plans for dispossession. Oriola’s chapter turns a focus on the development of the Niger Delta’s collective identity – a collective identity in a region with at least 40 different ethnic groups and 250 different languages and dialects (322). Oriola also touches on the need to address internal divisions within largely ethnically homogenous movements (327-328). Most starkly, Ibreck’s chapter includes a case study in Sierra Leone, where opposition to a land grab includes people who took opposite sides in that country’s civil war (257).

A strong asset of the book is the diversity of the forms of resistance it examines, including conventional social movement activity, as well as the so-called weapons of the weak, for instance, minor sabotage or continuing survival activity, such as small-scale mining, in defiance of apparent corporate property rights (Moloo, 305). However, efficiency of such actions, at least some of the time, suggests something is lost in the use of the term ‘weak’. As Moreda’s study of land grabs in Ethiopia finds: ‘sporadic and anonymous actions by local people cannot be overlooked and could in fact have the potential to have a major impact on projects’ (283). This diversity of forms of opposition reflects a diversity of political histories and contexts; some of the case studies are in places with histories of extreme repression. To Masalam opposition to agri-business coconut oil

production in central Sulawesi, Indonesia, faces the social memory legacy of the massacres in that country in the mid-1960s (which in many instances were aimed at land-reform seeking peasants) (105; 107-108). Here there was a transformation to 'overt modes of response and resistance' (113) in the more favourable context of the overthrow of the Suharto regime in the late 1990s.

Masalam's study is instructive in other ways. Notably in how there have been attempts to overcome 'a sense of hostility and suspicion among villagers' (105) by the adoption of a non-confrontational approach (110-111) to villagers who work for palm oil plantations or who have accepted compensation for the loss of land. Also, of note is the role of a legal aid organisation, *Bantaya*, which has focused on the provision of legal training to local activists, rather than a form of judicial activism which could pacify and demobilise (113-114). Such training, as well as other educational pursuits, and formal and informal meetings, take place in an important hub based on a camp on reclaimed land (109-110). Kapoor's chapter is equally attentive to the strategy and tactics of an anti-bauxite mining campaign among the inhabitants of the Niyamgiri Hills, Odisha, India. Particularly relevant is a 'conscious strategy to grow the movement', to 'widen the scope' of the constituency (82). This involved steps to appeal to various social groups who initially supported, or acquiesced in, the development project. For instance, many of the better educated youth were at first hopeful for employment or were won over by company sponsorship of sport and education (84-85). The opposition to the bauxite mine and associated refinery has been characterised by a diversity of tactics, including Supreme Court cases and mass mobilisations with a marked militant appearance (87).

One problem with the volume is that the voice of those people who were historically dispossessed as opposed to those being dispossessed today or in the recent past is largely missing. In other words, wage labour and the movements of wage labourers are absent (excepting the chapter on South African farm workers). This omission does not necessarily impact that much on the book's key aim, which is after all, to discuss resistance to on-going dispossession of rural populations by states and corporations. It does however potentially give a very distorted view to the unwary reader. After all, the majority of the population of rural India, for instance, are partially or wholly dependent on wage labour (Nilsen, 2018). In other respects, where relevant, it would have been useful to learn more

about wage labourers in the particular study areas. For instance, Masalam's chapter on part of central Sulawesi concerns an area where 80 percent of the population (106-107) are wage labourers. Some want to farm on their own account, others seemingly do not, some are plantation workers and seemingly less than enamoured of the effort to re-distribute the lands taken over by large plantations. More exploration of these issues would seem appropriate. It strikes the reviewer also that the nature of coconut oil production must be such as to allow small-scale production, which may not be viable in the case of other products.

The political-economic framing of the volume, in terms of 'accumulation by dispossession', seems to overlook other forms of dispossession, such as that brought about by rising input prices and falling output prices – something which is at the heart of India's current agrarian crisis (Nilsen 2018). Processes of peasant differentiation and consequent dispossession are also absent. Tania Murray Li's research on a highland community who adopted cash-crop cacao production, also in Sulawesi, Indonesia, explores a contrasting experience, where small-scale commodity production wrought winners and losers out of neighbours and kinsfolk (2014). This too is a form of capitalist dispossession.

The guiding thread which motivates these exclusions seems to be the idea that the various resistances and movements featured in the volume emanate from non-capitalist spaces. Namely from 'communal modes of production' (22) or 'land-based communal economies' (24). Unfortunately, there is only a short section of six pages in Kapoor's introduction positing this framework, so the argument is undeveloped (20–25). Is it the case that these are resistances from, in some sense, outside of capitalism, or, at the least, with feet in two social worlds? This is not a question which animates the individual chapters making it hard to answer on the basis of this book. Capitalism is a protean web of social relations, there is nothing necessarily non-capitalist about small-scale market producers. Indeed, the editorial introduction (21) compares arguments for individual land titling to the colonial fiction of *terra nullius*, but farmer-owned private property is the rural reality in much of the global South.

There is a case for exploring the dynamics of resistances/social movements emanating from 'land-based communal economies' (24). Shanin

(2018) covers some of the history of one approach that sees such lifeways as potentially contributing to a post-capitalist future, rather than being necessarily doomed archaic relics. The fact that there is actually only fleeting focus on ‘communal modes of production’ (22) in *Against Colonization and Rural Dispossession* means that it does not really address the specificity of resistances and movements arising from that context. Perhaps because in fact not all of the cases share this specific background? Meanwhile the premise that the agency of people subject to on-going processes of dispossession at the hands of large corporations is exclusively land-based and about reversing the process leaves us with a lacuna in understanding in some instances exactly what is going on. It is notable that in a number of the chapters the prospect of employment, or actuality of employment, in the incoming developments, are attractive to at least some local people.

Similarly, the introduction offers a very brief argument for the central contradiction within capitalism as being between ‘oppressor (imperialist) and oppressed nations’ (22). But the book carries histories of dispossession which continued under the sovereignty of national developmental states, such as post-independence India and Ethiopia under the Derg. Something which suggests that the internal differentiation of colonised (or formerly colonised) societies into different classes (and indeed into variously empowered or disempowered ethnic groups) is not an epiphenomenon of Western neo-colonialism.

The richly layered case studies in this volume make a useful contribution to teaching and learning about social movements at many levels within academe and outside it (many of the studies strike one as particularly useful as a contribution to social movement practice). For a focus on social movements in the global South in general it would of course have to be supplemented with other works (e.g. on movements of industrial workers such as Ness, 2016). The volume’s admirable emphasis on embedded local activism is a useful corrective to what is perhaps an over emphasis elsewhere on ‘global social movements’. The equally admirable emphasis on local agency is useful in development education, particularly as a corrective to the themes and tropes of the charity industry.

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## THE NOVEL AS A FORM OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

### Douglas Hamilton

Shamsie, K (2009) *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury) and (2017) *Home Fire* (London: Bloomsbury).

It's often argued that you can learn more about world politics, society and history through novels than you can through any number of academic textbooks, news stories or documentaries. Never has this been truer than with two novels by the Pakistani writer Kamila Shamsie – *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *Home Fire* (2017). *Burnt Shadows* is an emotional and intensely written epic set against key events in modern world history - from the United States (US) nuclear attack in Nagasaki, and the immense human suffering and continuing political consequences it created, to the post 9/11 world of US hegemony and arrogance. The story concerns two families whose multi-national members - Japanese, German, Indian, English, Pakistani and north American – live through the personal consequences of nuclear atrocity, the violent British partition of Pakistan from India, the development of the new Islamic Pakistan, imperial US and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, and the post-Iraqi war and Osama Bin Laden years of today.

The novel is a human and highly personal story that looks deeply into what racial, religious and national identity mean within the complex and unequal cultural relationships that have been produced between the 'developing' and 'developed' worlds, the 'backward' and the 'advanced'. It's also a moving story of ordinary lives and emotions caught up in the savage *realpolitik* of the modern day. With a number of the characters being multilingual - Japanese, English, German, Urdu and Pashto are spoken – Kamila Shamsie offers fascinating insights into the beauty of languages, and how words conjure up different meanings and nuance depending on the tongue being spoken. Place, identity and language are given centrality. At one point a character tellingly says: 'but I'm at home in the idea of foreignness' (2009: 143); a sentiment so common, but little understood in the 'developed' world today.

Perhaps Kamila Shamsie's greatest strength is how she shows the deep humanity, most often ignored, which somehow survives behind the great and

typically bloody events of the contemporary world. Through her enthralling stories she manages to inform, illuminate and provide understanding. Another great novelist, the Indian writer Arundhati Roy, comes to mind, especially her magnificent novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), set against Indian history in the 20th century. However, *Burnt Shadows* is arguably more accessible, more of a page-turner and more of a thriller, but no less worthy as a result.

Kamila Shamsie's most recent novel, *Home Fire*, already the winner of the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2018 and longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2017, as well as the recipient of a number of other awards, is shorter, less epic, but equally compelling. Each section of the novel is written from the individual perspective of the main characters – the members of two Pakistani families living in present day London. Each tells their own story and that of their interweaving lives – the elder sister Isme finally being able to go to the US to do a PhD, her sister and brother, the twins Aneeka and Parvaiz, going their own distinctive ways, and Eamonn, the son of a reactionary Pakistani-born British Home Secretary. The novel subtly explores the personal conflicts and contradictions of four quite different young people living with the burden of their respective overbearing fathers, and how each one deals with that in their own and quite singular manner. As in *Home Fire*, it deals with themes of love, passion, secrecy, commitment, betrayal and familial bonding.

Kamila Shamsie offers a humane and necessary understanding of how Muslim families live and survive under constant suspicion of being terrorists during a time of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) atrocities and the paranoid national and global state security response. As a recurring theme in her work, she highlights well the conflicting and painful relationship between the personal, the cultural and the political. In so doing, she provides not just sympathy but, more importantly, empathy for what it is to be Muslim today in a 'foreign' country. With her well-defined characters, especially women, and fluent prose and story-telling, she shows the continuing iniquitous relationship between East and West, rich and poor, male and female, and black and white. Kamila Shamsie is a writer to cherish.

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## When They See Us

Stephen McCloskey

*When They See Us* (2019) [Television Drama], directed by Ava DuVernay, US: Netflix. For more information visit: <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80200549> (accessed 1 July 2019).

On 19 April 1989, a 28 year-old investment banker, Trisha Meili, went for her regular jog in Central Park at 9.00pm. In the course of her run, she was hit over



the head, dragged 300 feet, viciously raped and beaten, and left for dead by her assailant. At the same time, around 30 Black and Latino teenagers streamed into the park from East Harlem, five of whom were arrested for the assault on Trisha Meili who, at the time, seemed likely to succumb to her injuries. What followed has become a national scandal; a miscarriage of justice that revealed the New York Police Department and District Attorney's Office to be guilty of racial profiling and a fundamental disregard for legal and human rights. The five boys - Raymond Santana (14), Kevin Richardson (14), Antron

McCray (15), Yusef Salaam (15) and Corey Wise (16) - were catapulted into a nightmarish and brutalising experience at the hands of racist police officers orchestrated by Lead Prosecutor, Linda Fairstein. Rather than prosecuting suspects on the basis of physical evidence, Fairstein immediately decided on the

boys' guilt and worked from that premise to secure their convictions at any cost. The arrest, trials, incarceration and, ultimate, exoneration of the five has been recreated in a gripping four-part television drama, *When They See Us* (Netflix, 2019a), directed by Ava DuVernay, who received an Academy Award nomination for *Selma* (2015) and went on to make *13<sup>th</sup>* (2016), a documentary about the United States' (US) judicial system and what it tells us about racial inequality.

### **Trump and the death penalty**

DuVernay seems assured of more awards and recognition for *When They See Us* (2019) which has become event television; a series which has risen above its medium to capture a national mood of anger and unease at the state of race relations in Trump's America thirty years on from the 1989 travesty of justice. In fact, *When They See Us* is a drama in which Donald Trump prominently features (Waxman, 2019) because in 1989, he spent \$85,000 on full page advertisements (Ransom, 2019) in the four main newspapers in New York calling for the restoration of the death penalty. The ad said 'I want to hate these muggers and murderers. They should be forced to suffer and when they kill, they should be executed for their crimes'. The headline of the advertisement screams in upper case 'BRING BACK THE DEATH PENALTY. BRING BACK OUR POLICE'. Michael Warren, who was a member of the legal team for the five boys, believes that Trump 'poisoned the minds of many people who lived in New York and who, rightfully, had a natural affinity for the victim' (Laughland, 2016). He believed that the jurors 'had to be affected by the inflammatory rhetoric in the ads'.

Despite the fact that the boys were exonerated of any involvement in the Central Park attack in 2002, Trump remains unrepentant saying in June 2019 ‘You have both sides of that. They admitted their guilt’, adding that ‘If you look at Linda Fairstein and if you look at some of the prosecutors, they think that the city never should have settled that case’ (Aguilera, 2019). His remarks carry a uneasy relation to the moral equivocation drawn by Trump between neo-Nazis and members of the Klu Klux Klan and anti-racist protestors at a demonstration

in Charlottesville in 2017. Trump blamed ‘both sides’ for violence at the protests despite one of the White

Supremacists, James Alex Fields Jr, ramming a car into a crowd of activists killing a woman, Heather Heyer (Shear and Haberman,

2017; Riotta, 2019). Trump’s moral ambiguity when it comes to race crime has spanned the three decades since the Central Park case and prompted *The New York Times* to opine that ‘Donald Trump

**BRING BACK THE DEATH PENALTY.**

**BRING BACK OUR POLICE!**

What has happened to our City over the past ten years? What has happened to law and order, to the neighborhood cop we all trusted to safeguard our homes and families, the cop who had the power under the law to help us in times of danger. Keep us safe from those who would prey on innocent lives to fulfill some distorted inner need. What has happened to the respect for authority, the fear of retribution for the courts, society and the police for those who break the law, who wastefully trespass on the rights of others? What has happened to the complete breakdown of life as we know it.

Many New York families — White, Black, Hispanic and Asian — have had to give up the pleasure of a family stroll in the Park at dusk, the Saturday stroll to the playground with their families, the bike ride at dawn, or just sitting on their stoops — given them up as hostages in a world ruled by the law of the streets, as rising bands of wild criminals roam our neighborhoods, dispensing their own vicious brand of hatred handed on whenever they encounter. At what point did we cross the line from the free and noble pursuit of genuine civil liberties to the reckless and dangerously permissive atmosphere which allows criminals of every age to beat and rape a helpless woman and then laugh as her family anguishes? And why do they laugh? They laugh because they know that soon, very soon, they will be returned to the streets to rape and maim and kill once again — and yet face no great personal risk to themselves.

Mayor Koch has stated that hate and racism should be removed from our hearts. I do not think so. I want to hate those snuggers and murderers. They should be forced to suffer and, when they kill, they should be executed for their crimes. They must serve as examples so that others will think long and hard before committing a crime or an act of violence. Yes, Mayor Koch, I want to hate those murderers and I always will. I am not looking to psychoanalyze or understand them. I am looking to punish them. If the punishment is strong, the attacks on innocent people will stop. I recently watched a newscast trying to explain the “anger in these young men”. I no longer want to understand their anger. I want them to understand our anger. I want them to be afraid.

How can our great society tolerate the continued brutalization of its citizens by crazed madmen? Criminals must be told that their CIVIL LIBERTIES END WHEN AN ATTACK ON OUR SAFETY BEGINS!

When I was young, I sat in a diner with my father and witnessed two young bullies cornering and threatening a very frightened waitress. Two cops rushed in, took up the thugs and threw them out the door, warning them never to cause trouble again. I miss the feeling of security. New York’s finest once gave to the citizens of this City.

Let our politicians give back our police department’s power to keep us safe. Unhackle them from the constant chains of “police brutality” which every petty criminal holds threateningly at an officer who has just risked his or her life to save another’s. We must create real conditions pertaining to the criminal population of this City. Give New York back to the citizens who have earned the right to be New Yorkers. Send a message loud and clear to those who would murder our citizens and terrorize New York — BRING BACK THE DEATH PENALTY AND BRING BACK OUR POLICE!

*Donald J. Trump*  
Donald J. Trump

2016.06.04, 09:30:00

The full page advertisement funded by Donald Trump

is a racist. He talks about and treats people differently based on their race. He has done so for years, and he is still doing so' (Leonhardt and Philbrick, 2018).

Trump's casual and regular use of racist language in his description of migrants, Muslims, Latinos and Blacks is one of the reasons why *When They See Us* has touched a nerve in America where police violence against the Black community has been condemned in a new report by The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR, 2019). The report finds that racial disparities 'permeate the criminal justice system, are widespread and represent a clear threat to the human rights of African

Americans, including the rights to life, personal integrity, non-discrimination, and due process, among others'. The report also considers:

"that issues of discrimination in policing and criminal justice in the U.S. are inseparable from social stigma and hate speech; violence by private citizens; an enduring situation of racialized poverty; and intersectional discrimination; as all of these are also governed by a structural situation of discrimination and racism" (Ibid).

### **A miscarriage of justice**

Many of these concerns are evident in *When They See Us* which begins with the arbitrary arrest of the five teenage boys who are aggressively questioned by police officers without their parents present for hours on end without food or a toilet break. The boys are coerced into signing confessions and their interviews are filmed for use in their subsequent trials. These scenes are gruelling to watch and shot in tight, confined spaces that add to the suffocating pressure we see put on the boys to confess. Physical and oral abuse is heaped on the five leaving them disoriented, frightened and vulnerable to the demands of the police. Indeed, such is the level of police aggression that one of the parents, Bobby McCray, fearful for the life of his son, compels him to confess. Another parent, Sharon Salaam, manages to secure the release of her son, Yusef, but he is not spared from the injustice that follows.

Episode two focuses on the trials of the boys in which the defence attorneys make clear the lack of physical evidence and DNA connecting them to

the crime. Such are the inconsistencies in the only evidence presented by the prosecution – the coerced confessions – that Fairstein insists on two trials to prevent the disjointed and contradictory nature of the filmed confessions becoming completely revealed. Fairstein’s certainty of the boys’ guilt brooks no doubt and sweeps away the reservations of Prosecuting Attorney Elizabeth Lederer. Despite the lack of physical evidence connecting any of the boys to the crime, they are found guilty in both trials and convicted to severe sentences ranging from five to fifteen years. One of the boys, Korey Wise was tried and sentenced as an adult and served thirteen years in adult prisons. The four other boys served 6–7 years in juvenile facilities.

The third episode follows the lives of Kevin, Yusef, Antron and Raymond after their release as they struggle to adjust to difficult domestic lives that are heavily constrained by curfews imposed on them as convicted sex offenders and former convicts. Only the most menial jobs are open to them despite Kevin, Raymond and Yusef completing degree courses in prison. Raymond ultimately goes back to prison for drug dealing while the other three men manage to survive in an unforgiving society. The drama is excellent in portraying how the men continued to serve their sentences outside prison, denied the kind of opportunities and liberties we all take for granted.

### **Prison and exoneration**

The fourth and, perhaps best episode, is given over in its entirety to the thirteen years served by Korey Wise in the adult penal system. Sentenced as an adult at the age of 16, Wise was shunted around different prisons, often long distances from his home in New York, which made family visits extremely difficult. The series makes it plain that the sentences of the boys were shared by their families who, in some cases, found themselves ostracised by association with their alleged guilt or unable to bear the financial cost of prison visits. Two sets of actors – all superb – play the five as adolescents and adults – with the exception of Jharrel Jerome, who plays Korey Wise in all four episodes. He convincingly transitions Korey from a terrified teenager initially incarcerated in Riker’s Island, to a young adult navigating the complex prison regime, both official and unofficial.

This episode helps us understand the interior life inside prison as Korey’s mind wanders and replays different scenarios to those that led to his



arrest. He wasn't one of the original police suspects and became caught up in the maelstrom after lending support to a friend. He spends long periods in solitary at his own request for his own protection having been beaten by fellow inmates to within an inch of his life. We learn that sex offenders are only one step up from child molesters and reviled in the prison system. Then in 2002, a prison inmate, Matias Reyes, confessed to the attack on Trisha Meili and his DNA matched that found at the scene. The five men were exonerated (Saulny, 2002) of the crime but not before Linda Fairstein and the police tried to suggest that Reyes was a sixth man, who had attacked Meili in league with the five. However, Reyes made clear that he was the sole assailant and in 2014 the city of New York reached a settlement with the five worth \$41 million (Joyner, 2019).

### **Coerced confessions unsafe**

Some viewers of *When They See Us*, may feel that a four-part drama spanning five hours, somewhat truncates the stories of the five. For example, we see very little of the time spent by four of the boys in juvenile facilities or learn much about their lives before the Central Park case. Nonetheless, the structure feels right in providing space for the families to tell their stories and Ava DuVernay explains in a follow-up discussion, *When They See Us Now* (Netflix, 2019b) with the cast and five men, that they all felt it important to devote an entire episode to the story of Korey Wise.

Viewers of the show with memories of the Irish conflict, will immediately recollect the scandalous miscarriages of justice – The Guilford Four (BBC, 2019), Maguire Seven (Nicholson, 2018) and Birmingham Six (Payton, 2016) - suffered by mostly Irish citizens in Britain. They were wrongly convicted on the back of police coercion and forced confessions, of pub bombings in Birmingham and London, carried out by the Irish Republican Army in the 1970s. They, too, were exonerated but only after long prison sentences were served and loved ones lost. They remind us that there is no place for police coercion in a properly functioning judicial system. Confessions extracted in such circumstances are unsafe and can lead to horrific miscarriages of justice.

### **Education is the key**

*When They See Us* reveals a rotten edifice of racism and corruption in the judicial system in New York. We know with the establishment of Black Lives Matter

(2019) that state and vigilante violence against Black communities is a concern across America. Jane Rosenthal, an executive producer on *When They See Us* sums up the current situation well when she says:

"Our country has more people of color incarcerated and we have more people overall incarcerated than any country in the world. That right there is wrong. We need to be adjusting our education system. It costs more to house a person in prison than it does to educate. There are still juveniles at Rikers Island and families that can't post bail. This story could be anybody" (Strause, 2019).

According to Netflix, 23 million account-holders have watch *When They See Us*, making it one of its most watched-ever shows (Warner, 2019). This drama has struck a chord in the US and seems to capture the vulnerability of Black communities to what the IACHR called a 'structural situation of discrimination and racism'. In the uncertain and volatile political environment of Brexit and Trump, active citizenship and education informed by values of respect, diversity, social justice and equality are needed more than ever.

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