Just Fundraising?

Finnish NGO campaign imaginaries of women and girls in the Global South

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This thesis is a contribution to the discussion on gendered representations of Global South subjects in development NGOs’ communication in the West, and the imaginaries of development they create and maintain. Empirically, it focuses on the context of Finland and particularly, on Finnish NGO fundraising campaigns that concentrate on girls’ and women’s rights in the Global South.

The changes in the Finnish political field within which NGOs operate gives contextual relevance to studying NGOs’ private fundraising in Finland. In 2016, the Finnish government cut public funding for development NGOs by 43%, which forced many organisations to rethink their funding channels. NGOs have since reported increase in competition for donors, which has contributed to the NGO fundraising ‘markets’ increasingly functioning with a capitalistic market logic. Public discussions on development and distant human rights issues thus get increasingly reduced to advertisement appeals, as NGOs must to ‘sell’ the rights-holders’ deservingness of donations. At the same time, the Finnish spectator-donors’ imaginary power in ‘making a change’ is reinforced.

This trend is not compatible with NGOs’ other important societal mission, which is the global education of Finnish citizens. A study conducted in 2015 shows that Finnish people’s knowledge on development in the Global South is extremely pessimistic.

From a postcolonial perspective on knowledge production and power, this thesis challenges the ‘ends justify means’ argument by questioning whether pessimistic and colonial imaginaries should be the price to pay for fight against inequality – and ultimately, are these means productive for global equality.

The empirical example campaigns for this thesis were Uncut by the International Solidarity Foundation, Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old by Plan International Finland, and Women’s Bank Walk by the Finn Church Aid –administered Women’s Bank. The ethnographic research consisted of 10 NGO and expert interviews, 8 short interviews with participants and volunteers in a campaign event, document analysis, discussions, participant observation, and online data collection. The data was analysed using qualitative and visual discourse analysis tools, against the theoretical framework of relevant postcolonial, post-humanitarian, feminist, and de-colonial theories.

The main findings of the research are that although NGOs consciously strive for the ‘respectful representation’ of women and girls in the Global South, the capitalist marketing framework used in fundraising communication is not productive for challenging the underpinning colonial discourse. Rather, by a rhetorical logic of empowerment, the power relations are denied – which only reinforces subordination, albeit disguises it better. However, there are significant differences between NGOs on how their power in representation and knowledge production is understood and reflected upon.

Keywords: Representation, imaginaries, Third World Women, girls in developing countries, subalternity, coloniality, postcolonialism, feminism, de-coloniality, NGOs, fundraising, campaigning, humanitarianism, marketisation
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>FAQ</td>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
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<td>FCA</td>
<td>Finn Church Aid</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
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<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kepa</td>
<td>Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus (Service centre for development cooperation)</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<td>SAIH</td>
<td>Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>Unicef</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>WAD</td>
<td>Women and Development</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, sanitation, and hygiene</td>
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<td>WID</td>
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1 Introduction

Ed Sheeran looks at the camera on a nightly Liberian beach and explains what he sees in disbelief. “They’re so tiny,” he repeats, while the picture moves down to show two boys sleeping in a fishing boat. The Comic Relief campaign video ends in daylight, with the British musician offering to pay hotel costs for a couple of Liberian street children for the night. It was also elected as the worst Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) fundraising video of the year 2017 in the satirical Radi-Aid awards, as a classic example of voyeuristic ‘poverty porn’ that NGOs have for years been pled to abandon (Radi-Aid 2017a). Although the video, which is called Ed Sheeran Meets a Boy Who Lives on the Street (and was withdrawn soon after the critical responses) seems an extreme example, its narrative remains by no means unusual in NGO fundraising: individual, poor and helpless victims in the Global South, rescued by an altruist Western celebrity, whilst convincing the spectator that by donating she can, too, help someone almost like Ed Sheeran did.

This thesis is a contribution to the discussion on NGO fundraising campaign appeals, and the discursive narratives of development they create and maintain. Focusing on campaigns that concentrate on issues related to women’s and girls’ rights in the Global South, this thesis scrutinises how gendered imaginaries of distant ‘need for assistance’ and development shape and produce knowledge in Finland. In the title, the question Just Fundraising? is asked in a similar way that Hesford & Kozol (2005) asked Just Advocacy? in the context of human rights advocacy. Firstly, the question asks whether NGO fundraising is just, in the sense of rightful or equitable: is it delivered with the same values of equality and rights that give meaning to NGO work? Secondly, it asks if fundraising is just, as in only, about raising funds for a good cause. Development communication by NGOs increasingly carry a fundraising aspect (Talous tutkimus 2016), and as Finnish donors get information on development issues primarily from NGOs’ online communication (Talous tutkimus 2017), fundraising appeals not only mobilise spectators to donate, but also produce knowledge of global development issues. Focusing

1 With ‘imaginaries,’ I refer to the discursively constructed and imagined narratives of the ‘Other,’ that are created by the visuals, rhetoric, and other components that build the representations used in campaign appeals. ‘Imageries,’ on the other hand, refer to the visual appeals only.
on the balance between the aim of collecting funds and the ways of doing it, the classic question of whether ‘ends justify means’ is at the centre of the problem-setting for this thesis.

The development discourse and its dichotomy of donors and receivers, the developed and the developing, or the West and the rest (to use Hall’s [1992] wording), is an essential framework for NGO fundraising. The ways this dichotomy is relied upon, however, has been under critical academic scrutiny already for decades, and increasingly under public scrutiny in the past years, as the Radi-Aid awards demonstrate. Radi-Aid started as an NGO communications watchdog in 2013, after the release of a satirical charity single *Radi-Aid: Africa for Norway*, in which Africans donate radiators for people in the cold country of Norway, parodying charity singles released in the 1980s for the Ethiopian famine relief (or ‘Africa’ in general) (SAIH Norway 2012). Although the empirical focus will not be on the discussion around the Comic Relief campaign video, it is a good example of a recent critical public discussion on NGO imaginaries. Similar discussions are found in the Finnish context, as well – for example around the recent campaign by Plan International Finland, in which a 12-year-old pregnant Zambian girl modelled for a ‘children’s maternity wear collection.’ This case, among two other not as provocative Finnish NGO campaigns, was part of the empirical data collected for this thesis.

Postcolonial studies give an important theoretical framework for the critical academic discussion on the representation of subjects in the Global South. Postcolonial thinkers see today’s global inequality as product of the dichotomous discourse that was instituted during the colonial world order, which created the colonised as the ‘subaltern.’ Although the discourse has its roots in colonial subordination, postcolonialists or subalternists argue that colonial dominance is created and recreated through subtle and taken-for-granted imaginary narratives, which do not require direct colonial rule but maintain power relations through knowledge production. (Bhambra 2014; Hall 1992; Said 1995 [1978]; Spivak 1988.) The postcolonial critics of common development imaginaries argue that personified representations of distant poverty underpin colonial and stereotypical understandings of people in the Global South as nothing but de-humanised victims, unable to help themselves. The heroic Western saviour, who has the power to act on
behalf of the unfortunate, further strengthens this patronising coloniality\(^2\). (Dogra 2012.) Postcolonial feminist thinkers add a gender perspective to this inequality in discourse, as development imaginaries often rely on stereotypical divisions between the ‘Third World Woman’\(^3\) and the ‘Western woman,’ and their male counterparts (Mohanty 1991b; Wilson 2011). Beyond the postcolonial approach which critiques coloniality in representation, some de-colonial thinkers argue that the entire development system that requires such a dichotomy in discourse maintains colonial inequality, and should thus be deconstructed (e.g. Escobar 2012 [1995]; Mignolo 2010a & 2010b).

However, as the argument goes, people need to know about the realities poor people in the Global South live in, otherwise nothing will ever change (Cohen 2001; Moon 2012). By showing poverty, inequality, or human rights violations as the ‘harsh realities,’ NGOs legitimise the necessity of their work to donors. The tensions between the need for ‘realism,’ and the need for abandoning victimising fundraising appeals, became publicly intense for the first time during the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s, when pictures and stories of people dying in relief camps were published. Moved by these stories, celebrities such as Bob Geldof and Bono activated themselves as humanitarians, arranging fundraising concerts and releasing humanitarian singles with other stars. The voyeuristic ‘Western saviour’ narrative got a boost, with a new highlight on ‘consumer aid’ (Cohen 2001, 179), as the celebrities gave dynamic contrast to the images from the dark and static continent of Africa, along with price tags for ending the suffering. (Dogra 2012; Kapoor 2013; Wilson 2011.) On the other hand, they collected millions of dollars for relief aid, which many consider a valid defence of such celebrity humanitarianism (Cooper 2008).

Against the context of the colonial ‘white man’s burden,’ the severity of reproducing such victim/saviour narratives of development was acknowledged after the Ethiopian famine, and codes of conduct on the respectful representation of subjects in the Global South have since been globally agreed upon (see e.g. CONCORD 2006; NGDO-EU Liaison

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\(^2\) As ‘colonialism’ is a historical act in which one nation imposes its power over another, ‘coloniality’ refers to wider and long-standing patterns of power that colonialism laid the foundations for (Mendoza 2016, 15).

\(^3\) Following the lead of Chandra Mohanty (1991a & 1991b), a postcolonial feminist critic, and many other scholars (e.g. Dogra 2011; Wilson 2011), I highlight the conceptual value loaded in this category by capitalising ‘Third World Women.’ Choices of terminology will be elaborated later in the introduction.
Committee 1989). As the Comic Relief video exemplifies, NGO imaginaries nevertheless often follow the familiar composition, as it has proven to appeal to donor audiences. (Dogra 2011.) However, as this thesis will suggest, the problem of power relations in NGO imageries should also be scrutinised within a larger framework, instead of only pointing fingers at NGOs that have succeeded poorly in the respectful representation of people. In the context of Finland, NGOs operate under higher pressure in funding than in years. Due to the governmental budget cuts in development executed in 2016, as much as 43% of government funding for NGOs was abruptly suspended, and development organisations have since had to invest more in accumulating private donations. Competition in the NGO markets for donations has increased, while fundraising campaigning is increasingly outsourced to advertising agencies, and some focus and force has been redirected from development work to the work in Finland. (Kepa 2016 & 2017a & 2017c; Kontinen et al. 2017; Taloustutkimus 2016.)

As representations of (under)development are delivered increasingly within the competitive market framework, they are necessarily designed as advertisements that would appeal to the largest audiences, and stand out in the ‘markets of doing good’ (Johansson 2017) – just as any market product. Consequently, what the spectators are told of the NGOs’ work via fundraising communication in, for example, the social media, reflects less the realities of development work, and more what the audience wants to hear about it. This is not compatible with NGOs’ other important mission in the West (besides raising funds), which is informing the Western publics about global development issues (Chouliarak 2013, 204; Johansson 2017, 10–11; Kepa 2015). In fact, Finnish NGOs could be argued to have failed in this mission disastrously, as a study commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) reveals that Finnish public knowledge on development in the Global South is shockingly pessimistic (Taloustutkimus 2015). As development NGOs work in ambiguous realities where results are usually not as fast and straightforward as the donor might want to hear, it is easier and more productive to offer ‘quick solutions’ or at least, a quickly obtained feeling of ‘having done something concrete about it’ to the publics. (Chouliaraki 2013; Dogra 2012.) As Ben Ramalingam (2013, 8) puts it,

At the end of the day, though, tales of ‘do-gooders gone/done bad, and with our cash!’ stick more, and are more compelling, headline grabbing, memorable, just simply more interesting, than ‘do-gooders who did a reasonably okay job in difficult circumstances
while navigating a really quite challenging set of compromises with limited resources, and achieved some limited success’.

Similarly, tales of inequality that are historically contextualised, multi-dimensional, that challenge our preconceptions, and require reflexivity upon our position within that inequality, are less compelling than tales in which one can become a hero by donating 10 euros.

Analysing gendered fundraising campaigns in Finland, this thesis will draw from postcolonial feminist theories to understand how development is communicated within the narrowing and increasingly commercialised framework for NGO funding. However, it also aspires to move beyond the debate over how subjects in the Global South should be respectfully represented in NGOs’ attempts at maximising their private fundraising. Instead, it provides a critical look at the system that forces NGOs not only to financially rely upon, but also to shape their work according to the Finnish public’s emotional responses. Further, this thesis will argue that fundraising is more than just raising funds for a good cause, as it should be considered playing part in constructing the outdated knowledge on development that Finns possess. From this perspective, this thesis attempts to answer firstly, whether NGOs that fight for global gender equality use discursive means that draw from colonial representations, and secondly: if so, are their means productive for their own ends?

The three example campaigns studied for this thesis were chosen for their visibility, simultaneous timing, and their shared objective of generating funds for work on women’s or girls’ rights in the Global South. The three cases were different enough that they could not be compared as such, but they all were (to different extents) affected by the governmental budget cuts, and showed responses to the same outside forces in their own ways. All have built a distinctive brand that their communication follows, and that appeal to each of their defined target audiences.

The already mentioned *Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old (12-vuotiaan äitiysvaatteet)* campaign by Plan International Finland was realised in cooperation with a famous fashion designer, a famous photographer, and an advertising agency, and it aimed at generating funds for work against child pregnancies by representing a pre-teen pregnant Zambian
girl wearing Finnish designer clothes (Plan 2017a). The second campaign under empirical scrutiny was Uncut (Silpomaton) by International Solidarity Foundation (Solidaarisuus), which aimed at raising funds and awareness on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by focusing on a specific community in Kenya, in which the NGO operates to fight FGM (Solidaarisuus 2017). The third campaign was Women’s Bank Walk (Kävele Naiselle Ammatti) by the Finn Church Aid (FCA) administered Women’s Bank (Naisten Pankki), which is not an NGO on its own, but a volunteer community intrinsically connected to its parent NGO’s values and operational models. The event-type campaign is organised annually, and it collects funds for women’s economic empowerment through vocational trainings in several countries in the Global South. (WB 2018b.) The ethnographic research was conducted in autumn 2017, and several methods were used for data collection: semi-structured interviews with 9 representatives of the three NGOs; 1 interview with a Finnish expert outside of the three NGOs; 3 short interviews with campaign volunteers; 5 short interviews with participants in a campaign event; participant observation; document analysis; and online data collection in the campaign web pages and social media feeds (Facebook). The data was then analysed using qualitative and visual discourse analysis tools.

Although development imaginaries constructed in NGO public communication have been quite extensively studied internationally, there is not much research on the relationship between those imaginaries, and the socio-political arenas NGOs function within. Accordingly, in Finland, comprehensive academic research on NGO imaginaries against the background of the political and economic realities has not yet been conducted. However, some Master’s theses have been written on related topics, although all scrutinise distinct aspects of development communication and from different disciplinary perspectives. There is a recent Master’s thesis on the discursive positions of actors in Finnish FGM-abolitionist campaign communication, studied from a communications theory perspective (Tuokkola 2017); a study on the visual representations of Africa in NGO communication (Paavilainen 2016); one on the representations of Third World Women in two Finnish development journals (Ronkainen 2014); and on the representation of human trafficking in Finnish anti-trafficking campaigns (Kauppinen 2017). Additionally, a recent book (not an academic publication) by Frank Johansson (2017), the director of Amnesty Finland, is a comprehensive opener for critical discussion on the marketisation of NGOs in Finland, and internationally.
I have so far used the label ‘women in the Global South’ to refer to the category in question, although the concept of ‘Third World Women’ is widely used in development communication, and (to a lesser extent today) in policy making. Variations with different nuances are used in different contexts, such as ‘Majority World Women’ (Dogra 2012), or ‘women in developing countries.’ The use of any of such labels has faced feminist critique from many perspectives, but most importantly, for creating an essentialised, seemingly homogenous group that has a predetermined, subaltern position in the world (Mohanty 1991b; Spivak 1988). Not only categorical divisions of gendered groups, but also the categorical “worlding” (Kapoor 2008, 7) of the so-called ‘Third World’ and its oppositional category of the modern ‘West’ has been widely criticised. The label ‘Third World’ has been reduced in use in the past years, as it echoes the Cold War political division of the world into the Western ‘First World’ and its rival Other, the socialist ‘Second World;’ as the remaining were labelled the ‘Third World.’ However, since the collapse of the so-called Second World and as the development discourse has further normalised and popularised, “the Third World has become the other of the First with even greater poignancy” (Escobar 2012, 215). As the meaning of the ‘Third World’ has changed since the Cold War, the label is still used in the development discourse in similar ways as the ‘Global South’ or the ‘developing countries.’ Firstly, it is used to refer to ‘underdeveloped’ geopolitical locations, defined as the countries that receive Official Development Assistance (ODA), but often in public rhetoric used more vaguely to refer to ‘poor countries’ in general. Secondly, it is used to refer to oppressed or subordinated groups within the developed (First) world; for example, African Americans in the context of the USA. (Johnson-Odim 1991, 314.) However, in policy and the academia, a more commonly accepted English term today is the ‘Global South,’ as it bears less historical and political connotation.

Although I am reluctant to use any of such simplifying categorical labels, they are strategically necessary for the purposes of this thesis. It would not be possible to study campaigns that rely upon categorisation without engaging in the established terminology, nor to criticise the terminology without using it. (Spivak 1996b.) Therefore, I use ‘Third World Women’ when the context renders it strategically necessary, to underline reference to the context in question. In most of the theory literature, the concept ‘Third World Women’ is used, and it is a widely-used label in public NGO rhetoric. As my intention is
to scrutinise public rhetoric instead of ‘behind the scenes’ policy making, I discretionarily use the more popularised concept. Additionally, as I have deduced that ‘Third World Women’ is used in English-language NGO jargon and academic discussions much in the same way as ‘kehitysmaiden naiset’ (‘women in developing countries’) is used in the Finnish context, I prefer this translation instead of the literal one. With the same logic, I refer to Western donor countries as the ‘West,’ as it is the most popularised label in the development discourse in the English language. When referring to the ‘Third World (Women)’ in contexts that do not require following NGO or theoretical terminology footprints, I use the slightly less political and more accepted (women in the) ‘Global South’ – acknowledging, however, that any label is poor to refer to such a heterogeneous category.

Any subaltern category needs an oppositional ‘elite’ category, as one would not exist without the other (Spivak 1996a & 1996b), and in the context of this thesis, the hegemonic elite counterpart for the ‘Third World Woman’ is the Finnish spectator-donor. I will analyse the campaigns’ imaginaries not only through the representation of women and girls in the Global South, but also through the representation of the discursively constructed category of Finnish spectators as prospective donors. The common (albeit false) representation of Finland as already having achieved gender equality, positions it on a powerful stance to advocate for gender equality globally (Formin 2018b). This position is easily exploited in fundraising appeals, as spectator-donors are referred to as dynamic and capable actors in gendered development issues, which (although permitting a gaze shift from the troublesome question of Third World Women’s representation) brings new challenges as the gaze remains in the level of individual altruism, instead of wider political questions that underpin the problems. This, as will be argued, reduces development to a self-expressive and apolitical spectacle of helping, which further increases discursive inequality. (Chouliaraki 2012 & 2013; Dogra 2012; Kapoor 2004; Madianou 2013.)

In the next chapter, the framework of relevant postcolonial, feminist, and de-colonial theories will be presented. Grounding postcolonial critique in today’s means of development communication, namely, the social media and connections to the entertainment industry, a post-humanitarian approach to donation appeals will also be utilised. In chapter 3, a selected overview of the NGO context in Finland will be provided,
which will give essential context to understanding the empirical data as part of a larger phenomenon. In chapter 4, the ethnographic methodological framework and especially multi-sited ethnography will be explained, followed by the presentation of research methods, the limitations of data, and reflection upon challenges in the research process and ethics. In chapters 5 and 6 the main findings will be presented, and then analysed against the theoretical and contextual frameworks laid out earlier. Lastly, the conclusion will bring up the research questions anew and intend to answer them as comprehensively as possible, within the frameworks of today’s realities and in relation to topical discussions within the public sphere.

2 Coloniality of representing the ‘Third World Woman’ in development

The independence of European colonies in the Global South around the mid-20th century provoked a shift from the tradition of anti-colonial theory to postcolonial theory, which argues that the imperial and colonial structures remain deeply embedded in knowledge, which maintains the established global inequality (Hiddleston 2009). When scrutinising the representation of women in the Global South within the development discourse, it is necessary to first understand the colonial dichotomy that lays the groundwork for the discourse. The stereotypical understandings of women and men in the Global South are largely shaped by the colonial discourse, which has been powerful in producing knowledge of the world. Michel Foucault famously dissected the interconnectedness between the production and spreading of knowledge, and the use and expansion of power structures, and his power/knowledge theory has been widely applied in postcolonial studies (Hiddleston 2009). Knowledge is produced by the ‘elite’ through seemingly objective channels such as academic studies, shaping discourses that determine how citizens understand the world around them, and position themselves within it (Nealon 2008). For example, the common Western understanding of quantified data being ‘neutral’ knowledge is a powerful discursive tool to govern citizens, as statistics get rarely questioned – even in contexts of measuring human life, which essentially carry multi-layered processes of interpretation (Merry 2016).

Drawing from a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and power, and opening the discussion on knowledge production from a global perspective, Edward Said (1995
analysed the postcolonial implications in the Western understandings of the Orient. He argued that oppressive narratives about the East were generated and regenerated by orientalists in subtle ways as texts, images, assumptions and preconceptions in the West. The knowledge that the orientalists produced – even, or especially, when it was not straightforwardly oppressive or violent, but romanticised – tells less about the Orient than about the Occident, and ultimately mirrors the Western need to discursively dominate and govern the East. (Ibid.) Said aimed to expose how the idea of ‘universal’ knowledge carried a distorted, Eurocentric claim to universality, while denying the particularity of that knowledge (Bhambra 2014), and his theory has given firm grounds for the postcolonial school of thought.

Following Said, Stuart Hall (1992) argues that the discourse of the ‘West and the Rest’ is one of the most powerful of all discourses, and it has shaped the ways people understand and categorise the world both in the so-called Western countries, as in the so-called non-Western countries. According to Hall, the historical formation of the modern ‘West’ is shaped into its current form not in the West separate from the rest, but necessarily on a global level through expeditions and the discovery of the ‘Other’ as contrast to ‘modernity.’ Today, Hall argues, the concept of the ‘West’ produces knowledge of and attitudes towards itself, functioning as a kind of ideology. (Ibid.) As for Said, the world consisted of two unequal halves, the Occident and the Orient; but in today’s Eurocentric global context, Hall’s somewhat more comprehensive division of the world into the West and the Rest is more descriptive for the same theoretical purposes. Similar divisions of ‘othering’ from the Western perspective have been utilised for political purposes throughout the history, for example, during the Cold War (Escobar 2012). Furthermore, as Kothari (2006, 12) states, the racialised representations of the ‘coloniser’ and the ‘colonised,’ which will be more discussed below, did not come to an end after the independence of colonies, but were only reworked to representations of the ‘developer’ and ‘developing.’

Producing and reproducing stereotypical and even caricaturist representations of the ‘Other’ sustains this powerful dichotomous discourse, and racism has played an important role in these representations since the colonial times. Fanon (2008 [1952]) positioned the idea of race in the very centre of anti-colonial and postcolonial resistance, as he argued that the coloniser created the ‘black man.’ According to him, stereotypes were utilised to
alienate the inferior black man from the superior white man – whilst paradoxically, the rhetorical endeavour was to integrate the black man into the dominant white culture as a ‘civilising mission.’ Fanon analysed some stereotypes created of the black man, such as sexual virility and violent behaviour, and argued that they created the black man simultaneously as distant, and intimidating in the white man’s eyes. (Ibid.) Among others, Ashis Nandy further argued that the stereotypes of the native (black) man that were used to justify colonialism – of which he pointed out for example hyper-masculinity and “childlike nature” – had deep psychological implications both in the mind of the coloniser, and the colonised (Hiddleston 2009, 65–66). These stereotypical colonial imaginaries are still reproduced in the development discourse not only within the categories of ‘developer’ and developed,’ but also in the feminist imaginaries of gender and development, as will be discussed next.

2.1 (Western) Feminism in development

People often ask me, what can be done to defeat hunger? If you had all the resources in the world to end hunger, what would you do? My answer is simple: empower women, because women are the secret weapon to fight hunger.

–Josette Sheeran, WFP Executive Director (WFP 2010)

Gayatri Spivak (1988) – whose take on subaltern agency will be more discussed later – argues that the subaltern subject, who is discursively colonised and oppressed by the elite, is always gendered. Thus, Spivak argues, the so-called ‘Third World Woman’ is the most subaltern of all colonised subjects (ibid.). Drawing from Spivak’s view, Chandra Mohanty (1991a & 1991b), one of the leading academics in transnational and postcolonial feminism, has analysed the construction and use of the subaltern category ‘Third World Women’ in the Western feminist discourse. According to her, the Western feminist language that uses such categorisations essentialises and discursively colonises women in the Global South. Whereas Spivak (1996b, 214) calls for the necessity of using strategic essentialism to some extent in political struggles, Mohanty argues more strictly against such essentialism in all pursuits (although she, too, uses the label ‘Third World Women’ strategically). According to her, ‘Third World Women’ are suppressed of their heterogeneity and labelled under an arbitrarily created category, which essentially

4 The concept ‘subaltern’ was first introduced by Antonio Gramsci, who used it to label all subordinate, non-hegemonic or non-elite social groups (Morton 2007, 96–98).
“carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse” (Mohanty 1991b, 53).

Mohanty argues that the idea of an ‘average Third World Woman’ in Western feminism is created by a combination of three presuppositions. Firstly, there is an underlying assumption of ‘women’ being a coherent group that shares universal interests in fighting oppression, regardless of race, class, nationality, or other identity factors, and is united by a global ‘sisterhood’ (Mohanty 1991b). However, intersectional feminism that distinguishes from this traditional view of ‘womanhood’ and considers other identity factors interlinked with gender, has been introduced and popularised to address this presupposition since Mohanty’s writing (Beetham & Demetriades 2007). Secondly, there usually are uncritically provided, descriptive and methodological proofs of women’s oppression, often in the form of quantified data deprived of original sociocultural contexts. Mohanty exemplifies this with the feminist discussion on Muslim women’s use of the veil, which is (or was at the time of Mohanty’s writing, as the discussion has evolved and ramified since) often taken as a proof of women’s oppression: “the greater the number of women who wear the veil, the more universal is the sexual segregation and control of women” (Mohanty 1991b, 66). Although the claim that Muslim women usually wear the veil is a perfectly valid description, its explanatory value as ‘proof’ of something is non-existent as reasons for wearing the veil vary dramatically between different contexts and inter-subjectively. (Ibid. 66–68; Sunder 2005.)

Thirdly, underlying the first two presuppositions there is the presumption of a binary mode of power and struggle: men possess power, and women face oppression. (Mohanty 1991b.) This binary understanding further evolves when Western feminists move from discussing Western women’s struggle to discussing Third World Women’s struggle, as the presumed gender oppression is supplemented by an ahistorical “third world difference” (ibid. 72) that legitimises a colonising and patronising attitude. The combination of these presuppositions creates ‘the average Third World Woman’ as represented in the hegemonic Western feminist discourse that is incorporated in the contemporary development discourse: she is an uneducated, traditional, poor victim who is essentially restrained by her gender. This logic of representation, argues Mohanty, tells more about the Western feminists’ self-representation as emancipated and educated subjects, than it does about the so-called Third World Women that are represented – much
in the same way as in Said’s theory of orientalist knowledge. (Ibid.) Mohanty has been criticised for arguing against all forms of generalisation and for being overly pessimistic about the possibility of any productive solidarity between the ‘Western’ and the ‘Third World’ feminists (Felski 1997) – arguments that Mohanty (2003) has later attempted to invalidate. Additionally, Mendoza (2016, 11) notes that by suggesting that feminist transformation always needs to rise from the grassroots experience, Mohanty echoes a Marxist view that burdens marginalised women to do all the revolutionary work. Nevertheless, Mohanty’s writings have had substantial influence in challenging hegemonic feminist thinking, and her call for alternative, de-colonised feminisms that could construct more grounded feminist strategies (Mohanty 1991b, 51–54), is central to the problem-setting of this thesis.

Feminist movements have managed to incorporate their perspective into the development agenda in small steps. The Women in Development (WID) movement in the 1970s managed to bring forth the importance of women as economically productive (instead of only reproductive) agents in development, as it criticised the assumption that men’s prosperity would ‘trickle down’ to women (Beetham & Demetriades 2007, 201). However, WID was widely criticised, for example for failing to refer to women (and men) as anything more than their essentialised and heteronormative ideals (Jauhola 2010, 30), and for a narrow definition of ‘development’ only as ‘economic development’ (Mohanty 1991b, 63). The Women and Development (WAD) movement that followed, drew from dependency theories and argued that women have always been integral to development structures. However, WAD was also criticised, for example for remaining too structural and not reflecting grassroots level realities. (Dogra 2011, 340.)

The more holistic Gender and Development (GAD) movement emphasised gender mainstreaming and the recognition of unequal gender relations in all levels of development thinking (Beetham & Demetriades 2007, 201–202; Dogra 2011; Jauhola 2010, 30). Feminisms that challenged the hegemonic Western feminist perspective could also be heard in the GAD framework, as intersections between gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and other identity factors were acknowledged within the feminist agenda (Beetham & Demetriades 2007, 202). Since the introduction of GAD, a more holistic women’s empowerment rhetoric has been integrated in development policy making, for example, in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, and the
following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (UN 2015). In Finland, empowering women and girls is articulated as the first of four key objectives in the national development policy plan (Formin 2018b). However, the practical delivery of the GAD framework has been criticised: even with the widely-agreed deficiencies of WID, current practices and rhetoric of gender and development still largely reflect essentialised and heteronormative understandings of women (Dogra 2011, 340; Jauhola 2010; Mohanty 1991b). Further, Jauhola’s (2010) study from Aceh, Indonesia shows that cultural understandings and governmentalist objectives play a crucial role in the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming policies, and as a result, gender mainstreaming might only be reaffirming established gender roles.

Although feminist perspectives have been increasingly incorporated in development thinking and policy making, determining who is worthy of development aid still relies much on the racial and gendered stereotypes of the colonised Third World ‘Others’ discussed above. For example, the presumption that the so-called Third World Women are more responsible and thus worthier of development assistance than their male counterparts, who are “inherently ‘lazy’, irresponsible and preoccupied with sensual pleasure” (Wilson 2011, 318), connotes the colonial stereotypes that Fanon and Nandy argued as caricaturist representations of the black or native man. Spivak’s (1988, 294) famous phrase “White men are saving brown women from brown men” was originally used in the context of the Hindu sati-ritual in colonial India, but the quote is often repeated in the critique of gendered development interventions (Kapoor 2004; Wood 2001). Further, Mohanty (1991b) argues in her criticism of Western feminism that instead of white men, white women are now saving brown women from brown men. Accordingly, gender mainstreaming in development has, according to many de-colonial feminist scholars, been more gender ‘whitestreaming’ (Mendoza 2016). Whoever the saviour of ‘brown women,’ the black/brown/native man remains the evil in this Western feminist narrative. As Ratele (2014) argues being the case in (South) African feminist

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5 In the sati-ritual, Hindu widows commit suicide out of respect to their dead husbands. The ritual was debated in the late 19th century between the colonial East India Company, which banned it ‘to protect the widows,’ and the readers of Hindu scriptures, who defended the ritual both for its religious purposes, and for the argument that the widows ‘wanted to die.’ Spivak (1988) argued that the debate should be scrutinised beyond the question of cultural relativism: in both sides of the debate, the voice of the widows themselves was silenced, and they remained governed objects instead of sovereign subjects. (Ibid.)
development work, ‘African masculinity’ is often rhetorically connected to a traditional backwardness, and perceived to be at the core of gendered development issues in Africa. This perception ultimately makes the feminist development approach in Africa inconsistent with its gender equality aim. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, adding to the presumption that the Third World Woman is essentially a victim constituted of the presuppositions Mohanty suggested, her special worthiness of aid often relies on an “essentialist vision of third-world-woman-as-authentic-heroine, a woman who is close to the earth, self-aware, self-critical, nurturing of culture, community, and family” (Wood 2001, 433) – another stereotype that does not fall far from Said’s romanticised ‘Other.’ As Nandita Dogra (2011, 335) argues, the Third World Woman is usually represented within the feminist development discourse in the realm of nature, with occasional subhuman (‘the third world difference’) or superhuman (‘the authentic heroine’) features. Thus, despite of women’s more visible agency in development than before (or than that of men), the ‘Third World Woman’ is still designated into predetermined roles that reflect the Western (feminist/development) preconceptions of her – as is her male counterpart.

2.2 Donate NOW! NGO fundraising appeals

In January 2014, the largest newspaper in Finland published a pictorial of two Kenyan girls, aged “about 14,” in the day of their genital mutilation (HS 2014). The artistic and rather shocking black-and-white photos were taken by Meeri Koutaniemi, a Finnish photojournalist who has since become one of the most famous Finnish visual artists to raise awareness and discussion on girls’ rights in the Global South. From the awareness raising point of view, the pictorial was a success: FGM became one of the most discussed topics in the Finnish public sphere for days if not weeks, and many newspapers published articles on the topic while it was ‘hot.’ NGOs working to eradicate FGM got publicity, which according to an interviewee from the International Solidarity Foundation, could be seen in the public’s increasing willingness to donate. The photographer Koutaniemi became a sort of ‘goodwill ambassador’ for Finnish FGM-abolitionist NGOs, and continues to give them a celebrity face.
The discussion, however, did not only remain around the brutality of the habit of FGM, but was soon directed to the brutality of the discourse in which we – as Finnish spectators or artists – claim the power to engage in voyeurism to the extent that we unveil the vulnerable girls’ most vulnerable moments whilst we sip our morning coffees. Among other Finnish development organisations, the Finnish Unicef disapproved of the photos (while interestingly, the German Unicef awarded them; Laakso 2014; Unicef Germany 2014). A complaint was made to the Council of Mass Media in Finland, which began investigations on whether the pictorial followed good professional journalistic practice due to its victimising nature, with the faces of the girls being recognisable. The council concluded in May 2014 that the pictorial did not violate good professional practice, and that the newspaper had rightful societal reasons for publishing it. (JSN 2014.)

Although the case can be seen being more about journalistic and artistic freedom than NGO fundraising, the discussion around it followed similar argumentation than discussions on ‘respectful representation’ of Third World ‘Others’ in development NGO imageries. As the pictorial boosted public awareness of FGM, it became essentially linked to development NGOs: the photographer Koutaniemi became a celebrity face for not only NGOs that work to eradicate FGM, but also for many other causes that are related with girls’ rights in the developing countries. She is often considered an expert on FGM in the media due to her experience from the grassroots level (for example, a recent Master’s thesis on FGM campaign communication positioned Koutaniemi as an expert in FGM; Tuokkola 2017), and by chance, she plays a part in two of the campaigns that are used as empirical data in this thesis, as will be discussed in the data analysis chapters.

Similar questions of subaltern representation are much-theorised within the postcolonial school of thought, and widely discussed in the field of development that relies on the Western discourse of poverty. As Claire Moon (2012) argues, what is being said is not as important as how it is said in advocating human rights issues, and the ways of providing solutions is essential to fundraising and advocacy. She notes that effective NGO advocacy is divided into three parts: declarative (‘this is happening’), affective (‘please do something about it’), and curative (‘this is the solution’). (Ibid. 897.) The criticism for such appeals usually focuses on how the ones affected by ‘what is happening’ are represented, and in which relation to those that are represented as capable of providing ‘the solution.’ The underlying problem in this representation lies in giving voice and
agency to the subaltern. How can the Third World Woman be represented, for it to be safe to say that she is given a voice, and that she is ‘empowered’ to develop in her own terms? I will now present the main trends in the postcolonial discussions on development imaginaries, as they have evolved from the ‘poverty porn’ pictorials in the 1980s, to (seemingly) more comprehensive and empowering gendered imaginaries.

2.2.1 ‘Poverty porn’ imaginary

But say a prayer, pray for the other ones
Oh at Christmas time, it's hard, but when you're having fun
There's a world outside your window
And it's a world of dread and fear

And there won't be snow in Africa this Christmas time
The greatest gift they'll get this year is life
Where nothing ever grows
No rain or rivers flow
Do they know it's Christmas time at all?

--Do they know it’s Christmas? By Band Aid (1984)

The lyrics above roughly encapsulate how the receivers of development or humanitarian aid were represented in the 1980s: Third World people (often ‘Africans’) represented as a homogenous group of suffering victims, with no power over their own lives, only waiting for the Western saviour (often a celebrity) to come to the rescue. Looking back now, it could seem obvious that this narrative is problematic, as it demonises Africa as a dark continent with inhabitants so preoccupied with survival, that they do not even know when Christmas is. However, I will provide some important critical arguments to challenge the narrative. Firstly, creating a division of the world into passive African victims and their active Western saviours does not get us far from the narrative that justified colonialism with the patronising rhetoric of ‘white man’s burden’ – in which the colonised people were represented as backward and passive objects of a European ‘civilising mission’ (Dogra 2006; Wilson 2011). Secondly, generalising massive quantities of people, cultures, and states into seemingly homogenous categories such as ‘Africans’ or ‘Third World people’ under the victim narrative, falls into essentialising those groups into nothing more than their negative stereotypes that were discussed earlier.
Thirdly, by de-contextualising tragedies such as famines or poverty and personifying them with pictures of suffering victims, the narrative de-politicises issues that are in fact, deeply political. Personifying suffering by representing agents as either individual victims or their celebrity-helpers over-emphasises the agency and capability of individuals in solving complex global issues. Politics is thus reduced to a spectacle of helping, and the questions that address the root problems of the tragedies get ignored. (See e.g. Dogra 2006 & 2012; Douzinas 2013, 160; Lyon 2005; Sharp et al. 2010, 1139.) As will be argued later, the issues of de-politicisation and de-contextualisation remain relatively unaddressed even after moving beyond the overly victimising representations of Global South subjects in development imaginaries.

The ‘heyday’ of victimising or ‘poornographic’ imaginaries in public development and humanitarian discourses took place during the Ethiopian famine in the mid-1980s, when music groups like Band Aid were formed, and concerts like Live Aid\(^6\) were held to raise funds for the cause (Dogra 2006). Their infamous imageries of dying children with flies in their eyes fell into representing Third World subjects as powerless, and even child-like victims of their own environments – “a world of dread and fear,” as Band Aid phrased it. According to Dogra (2012), such simplified and victim-centred representations reinforce the common myth of poverty in the Global South having either ‘internal’ causes such as corruption, overpopulation, or violence; or ‘external’ causes such as natural disasters or epidemics. This narrative eliminates any external political factors that would require Western reflection, and enables the use of technical or medical rhetoric to ‘treat’ the problems ‘out there.’ (Ibid. 88.) As a response to the critique, by the 1990s European NGOs had had to agree upon a Code of Conduct on Images and Messages Relating to the Third World (NGDO-EU Liaison Committee 1989), which guided NGOs to avoid representing Third World subjects with simplification, exoticism, victimisation, or in any ways that foster a sense of “Northern superiority.” The Code of Conduct was revised in 2006, and the current code further stresses the need to respectfully represent Third World subjects in their own terms and with their own voices (CONCORD 2006).

\(^6\) Live Aid consisted of two live charity concerts held in London and Philadelphia 1985, and was organised by Bob Geldof to raise funds for famine relief in Ethiopia (Kapoor 2013, 14).
Despite decades of critique, victimising and de-humanising representations of the Global South persist in development and humanitarian appeals, although more in the latter than the former (Dogra 2006). Celebrities play increasingly a part in the narratives, as will be discussed more later. 30 years after publishing the controversial original, a new version of the *Do they know it's Christmas?* single was released in 2014 by Band Aid 30 – with updates on the British artists performing, and with some parts of the lyrics edited as a response to the critique. The response was rather vague, however, as the message of the dark continent of Africa remained in the lyrics, and the narrative of the Western celebrity saviour was not contested. The new music video begins with a skinny black woman’s dead body being carried from her arms and legs, followed by a picture of Bob Geldof and others on the red carpet (Band Aid 30 2014).

2.2.2 Empowerment: respectful representation or ideological instrumentalisation?

*Invest in a girl, and she will do the rest.*


The trend that followed the 1980s’ critique of the negative representation of development aid receivers as passive victims, was a turn to ‘positive’ imaginary and representation, which was more in accordance with the Code of Conduct that NGOs had to agree upon. (Dogra 2006 & 2012; Wilson 2011; Wood 2001.) As the discussion on representation had previously revolved around how global poverty or catastrophes such as famines in the Global South were represented though suffering, by the 1990s the focus began to shift to the heroic individual *overcoming* of this suffering.

‘Women’s empowerment’ has become a widely-accepted development objective in the 21st century after the common agreement upon the GAD framework in development policy, as discussed earlier. Leaving aside discussions on how women are in fact ‘empowered’ in the grassroots level of development projects, there has also been critical discussion on the rhetoric of empowerment, by which is meant the promises of empowerment that the Western donors are provided (Cornwall 2003, 1327). In much of the NGOs’ ‘empowerment’ imaginary, women are represented positively as dynamic,

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7 The effectiveness of ‘empowerment’ in practice has been widely debated; see e.g. Cooke & Kothari (2001); Cornwall (2003); Kapoor (2004).
eager, and smiling agents of development. In these representations, the individual Third World Woman’s agency is emphasised, as she is no longer depicted as a nameless face of poverty, but with her own name and personal story, which is often told with direct quotes to underline that she speaks with her own voice. Her pictures usually highlight her agency: she is depicted working (and happy doing so), as an active contributor to her and her community’s development. (Dogra 2006; Wilson 2011.)

As mentioned earlier, the Third World Woman’s deservingness of aid often relies on the notion of ‘authentic heroism’ (that the Third World man seems to lack), which highlights that she has worked hard to rise from poverty or victimhood: “Despite her lack of education, so-and-so became a leader and organized women to victory in such-and-such a place” (Wood 2001, 434, italics in original). According to Dogra (2011 & 2012), the problem with this heroic representation is that it does not challenge the underlying presumption that the women were still essentially traditional, ignorant victims prior to the Western development intervention that gave them technical solution of empowerment, along with the knowledge and confidence they intrinsically lacked. The real agency and power, argues Dogra, remains in the hands of the Western agents, without whom the ‘empowered’ would still be a ‘victim.’ Following Mohanty’s (1991b) critique of Western feminism, even in the ‘women supporting women’—solidarity movements that intend to make a feminist statement of empowering women to break free from traditional patriarchy, only the Western women possess agency as they set the frameworks and provide the tools with which others can ‘help themselves.’ (Dogra 2012.)

As agency can be considered a male attribute from the subaltern perspective (Dogra 2011, 344), the intention falls far from making a feminist statement. It rather only reflects the already existing patriarchal values by giving the altruistic Western women the role as the patriarchs of the women they ‘empower.’ (Ibid.; Dogra 2012.) As a receiver of the gaze that determines what she needs and wants, and ultimately, who she is, the Third World Woman gets further feminised under the masculine eyes of the Western woman.

When Third World Women are represented as heroic agents of development, “[n]ot only does the process of ‘othering’ continue, but the construction of these women as hyper-industrious ‘entrepreneurs’ is incorporated in this process,” argues Wilson (2011, 323). According to her, this instrumentalises subaltern women to legitimise a neoliberal ideology that assumes that “the ‘empowerment’ of ‘developing world’ women via the
market is the ‘solution’” (ibid. 323; Wilson 2013). Whether it is the only solution is rendered beyond debate with the rhetoric of common sense, which claims to state things ‘as they are’ (Sharp et al. 2010). As an example, Spivak (1999) argues that the increasing and rarely questioned development focus on Third World Women’s microloans, separated from infrastructural support, has served the agenda of promoting neoliberal capitalist economy more than women’s empowerment, which “perpetuates the oppression of the very women that development agencies claim to empower” (Morton 2007, 137).

The ambiguous concepts of ‘empowerment’ and ‘participation’ are often overused and unproblematised: they service a “part of an apolitical ‘one-size-fits-all’ formula for development, an ‘act of faith’ that is rarely critiqued” (Sharp et al. 2010, 1135). The narrative of development that is reproduced in this rhetoric focuses on a neoliberal ideal of individual agency and hard work, erasing any structural context such as the state or the market economy from the background. The Western donor, then, as the ‘consumer’ of the narrative gets a more direct access to the Third World Woman whom her donation has helped to ‘empower,’ making development seemingly direct, individualistic, and apolitical. (Wilson 2011, 324.) Thus, the Third World Woman’s authentic heroism that grants her the donors’ sympathy not only reproduces colonial (gendered and racialised) stereotypes, but also bolsters an ideological view of development in which individual success is up to personal motivation (supported by charity). (Dogra 2012; Sharp et al. 2010; Wilson 2011.) In addition, Cohen (2001, 206) argues that in human rights communication, the notion of ‘empowerment’ has not so much led to changes in the representation of the objects of the appeal, as it has helped the audience to overcome their passivity and feeling of helplessness, which will be discussed next.

2.2.3 Altruism as an ironic spectacle

The causes that are made visible by development NGO fundraising campaigns are necessarily distant to the Western spectator. Whichever ways the Third World subjects are represented in the campaign imaginaries – as victims of their circumstances or as overcomers of their victimhood, – their representation must be delivered in the audience’s terms (or from within the “elite discourse;” Spivak 1988) for the cause to be comprehensible and create desired reactions in viewers. Pity or compassion are often the emotional appeals that NGO imaginaries seek (Chouliaraki 2006; Lyon 2005), although
Lyon (2005) notes that pity is not enough to facilitate action. According to her, pity as a political emotion – as already Aristotle defined it – includes a sense of the possibility of the same happening to the viewer herself, or to one of her close ones. Images facilitated through the global contemporary media, however, do not easily create such pity, as the distances between the spectator and the sufferer are long enough to liberate the spectator from picturing someone like herself in the scene of suffering. (Ibid. 175.)

The discursive relationship that is created in NGO campaign narratives between the spectator-donor and the distant Third World Woman, is an important factor in effective NGO communication, as it is part of the ‘curative’ regime of advocacy (Moon 2012, 897). Creating and maintaining the discursive category of the Third World Woman as the subaltern ‘Other,’ requires simultaneous creation and maintenance of the opposite category of the elite ‘Same’ (Kothari 2006, 12; Spivak 1988). Lilie Chouliaraki (2013) argues that the ‘politics of pity,’ which centres around the object of pity or compassion and creates empathic reactions in spectators, has shifted to a ‘politics of irony,’ in which the donor as a consumer of altruism is a more central figure in development imaginaries, than the distant sufferer. For the ironic spectator, ‘how I feel’ about helping the distant poor overrules the need to understand why the distant poor need help in the first place. Although the discussion on egoism in altruism is by no means new but has deep roots in moral philosophy, Chouliaraki sees ironic solidarity going beyond this discussion, as it places the self not only part of, but at the very centre of altruistic actions. (Chouliaraki 2012 & 2013.)

Celebrity humanitarianism is one manifestation of the ironic spectatorship that Chouliaraki (2012 & 2013) calls post-humanitarian: as the object of altruism is too distant to relate to, the celebrity becomes the instrument or mediator of empathy, liberating the spectator from having to turn her emphatic gaze to the distant sufferer. The celebrity who has witnessed suffering is more relatable to feel empathy towards, as she is an embodiment of cultural and humane attributes that the Western public identifies with, and thus mirrors the spectator herself (Chouliaraki 2012; Yrjölä 2012, 363–365). Since the celebrity humanitarianism ‘boom’ in the 1980s – led by stars like Bob Geldof and Bono – celebrities have facilitated NGO causes with different “strategies of witnessing” (Chouliaraki 2012, 6) that require different levels of commitment. For example, Audrey Hepburn used her professional actress expertise to communicate altruistic emotion,
whereas Angelina Jolie has expressed more authentic emotional reactions by crying out how the suffering she has seen has changed her (further legitimising her commitment by adopting children from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Ethiopia\(^8\)). (Ibid.; Kapoor 2013.) In Finland, the photographer Koutaniemi has become such a celebrity humanitarian who, instead of only raising funds for girls’ rights, uses her art for activism and thus provides a more ‘concrete’ mode of activism that the benevolent Finn can relate to. As Kapoor (2013, 13) notes, “do-gooding is a virtual career requirement for the established or aspiring star” today. Thus, celebrities with even less understanding of NGO causes than the previously mentioned ones, are expected to speak for them – an example of which could be the video briefed in the introduction, in which the singer Ed Sheeran advocates the NGO Comic Relief’s work simply by marvelling at Liberian street children.

The direct implications of celebrity humanitarianism in NGO communication are mutually beneficial: the celebrity reinforces her persona ‘brand’ that is shaped by corporate marketing and associated with products, lifestyles, and values (Kapoor 2013, 86), while the NGO “capitalizes on the massive symbolic capital of the global entertainment industry in order to put the celebrity brand at the service of [the NGO]” (Chouliaraki 2012, 13). Although ‘celebrity diplomacy’ is also argued to be ultimately beneficial for the development sphere (see e.g. Cooper 2008), there is wide criticism of this ‘entrepreneurialising’ of the sovereign celebrity-product in the NGO scene. Firstly, it de-politicises development and reduces it into humanitarianism – which is necessarily apolitical and impartial, unlike development (Repo & Yrjölä 2011, 57) – as the celebrity individual’s ability to ‘get things done’ overrules professional understanding and policy. Secondly, it engages us primarily with the brand (of the celebrity or the NGO) rather than the cause of solidarity, which renders understanding the cause irrelevant. (Chouliaraki 2012 & 2013.) Lastly, the enforced incorporation of humanitarianism in personal fame further constructs the ‘civilising missional’ understanding of Africa “not only as a place, but as a purpose in the world system” (Repo & Yrjölä 2011, 45).

\(^8\) The adoptions, too, resulted impressive, albeit controversial, advocacy: after Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt adopted a child from Ethiopia, there was a reported increase in US child adoptions from Africa, and adoption agencies got specific enquiries on “how to adopt a kid from Ethiopia” (Kapoor 2013, 17).
The spectator as the witness of the witness of the distant cause, becomes further distanced from the subjects she seemingly empathises with, enabling her to advocate change while maintaining distance (Dogra 2012, 116–117). As the spectator-donor does not have to reflect upon the development cause but supporting it with small efforts is enough, her superiority gets emphasised: 'by doing so little here you can help someone so much there’–rhetoric connotes an imaginary, static world order, in which the consumerist idea of the Western power over the Southern powerlessness gets reinforced (ibid. 88). How ‘respectful’ the imageries attached are, does not make much difference in this composition of power. This appeal of mobilising spectators to become donors by making them feel morally superior is common in NGO fundraising, as it is an easy way to gratify a need for self-satisfaction (Cohen 2001, 221). Johansson (2017, 231) provides an illustrative example from the Swedish Unicef’s TV advertisement, in which Jesus, Mother Theresa, and Gandhi are astonished by a young man, who tells them how easy saving the world is: “I just clicked a banner” (Unicef Sweden 2013).

The use of instruments that are appealing (or ‘sexy’) to the audiences, such as celebrities or technology that enables the spectator to feel exaggeratedly good about herself for doing so little, are often backed by arguments of increased visibility for NGO causes. Not only donating, but even just ‘sharing’ in social media is often presented as enough to contribute to change. (Chouliaraki 2013; Madianou 2013.) From an NGO fundraising perspective, visibility for a cause is presumed to be always good, as spectators are assumed to reflect and act more on humanitarian causes the more they are made visible: “If only people knew, they would act” (Cohen 2001, 185, italics in original) goes the argument (Moon 2012). A widely-discussed example campaign with the visibility-leads-to-action presumption, was the Californian NGO Invisible Children’s Kony 2012 campaign. It aimed at arresting the Ugandan LRA leader Joseph Kony by making him ‘(in)famous’ with an emotionally appealing video that went viral globally on YouTube (Invisible Children 2012). The campaign was defended by the argument of the necessity of visibility in order to capture Kony, although it was widely criticised for following the typical narrative of demonised African context in need of Western saviours’ simple solutions. (Alava 2017, 4; Madianou 2013.) Further, Nibbe (2011) argues that Invisible Children –

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9 Lord’s Resistance Army, the rebel group that infamously abducted children to become child soldiers during the Northern Ugandan conflict between 1986 and 2008 (Alava 2017).
which had also earlier published videos similar to but not as viral as the Kony 2012 – produces “propaganda” that “effectively buries any serious discussion about the political and historical underpinnings of the [Northern Ugandan] conflict, or any logic to LRA actions” (236), resulting into little more than “missional masturbation” (246): feeling good about acting on impulse, but making no change in the situation and remaining at a pornographic level of violence.

The assumption that ‘knowledge leads to action’ is challenged firstly, with the concept of ‘compassion fatigue,’ which can be described as a state of denial despite available information. However, as Cohen (2001) argues, ‘media fatigue’ is a more accurate term: although there is no evidence of a decrease in compassion, the media still suggests that no one cares and filters its content accordingly. This media framework of reporting, then, may lead to NGOs using more outrageous means of getting attention. (Ibid. 191–192.) Secondly, the wider post-humanitarian critique of the ‘calls for social change’ through social media visibility revolves around the false cosmopolitan assumption that visibility would democratise responsibility and spread reflexivity upon global causes among masses (Madianou 2013). As Madianou (ibid.) and Chouliaraki (2006) note, instead of creating a cosmopolitan connection between the spectator and the distant cause, social media activism – or ‘clicktivism’ – bolsters a communitarian connectivity, in which the spectator feels connected to her fellow social media activists – again, rendering reflexivity upon the cause irrelevant. Superficial altruistic actions such as clicktivism only strengthen the Western spectator’s moral status in her own (social media) community, making her altruism primarily about voyeuristic self-expression. ‘Action’ is thus fetishised and reduced to a simplistic indulgence of sharing in social media, while contexts of suffering or inequality are not understood, and the moral meaning of action is lost. (Chouliaraki 2006; Madianou 2013.)

In summary, the main critique of commonly used representations of poverty when mobilising spectators to become donors, is that they remain shallow in contextualisation, and devoid of analysis or space for reflection. According to Dogra (2012), a central problem is that NGOs focus too much on balancing between political correctness (avoiding negative imaginary) and realism (showing audiences the ‘harsh realities’). Instead of sticking to this question, the ethical debate should be of a wider, social constructivist perspective of how (gendered) poverty could be represented as a
contextualised and historical issue that is not isolated and ‘out there,’ but deeply linked to Western prosperity. (Ibid. 67.) A widely-accepted analysis of the situation among academics who study the socio-political implications of NGO communication, is that through simplistic and sentimental imaginaries of subjects in the Global South and through the glorification of individual agency both ‘here’ and ‘there,’ the politics, the global economy, the historical dependency, and other multidimensional forces that can be considered at the root of global inequality, are silenced or rendered irrelevant (e.g. Chouliaraki 2006 & 2012; Dogra 2012; Douzinas 2013; Hesford & Kozol 2005; Yrjölä 2012).

2.3 De-colonising representation?

“There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak,” declared Spivak (1988, 305), answering her own question in her famous essay Can the subaltern speak? Although her conclusion has been misinterpreted pessimistically to mean that the subaltern subject has no agency and is doomed to eternal silence, what Spivak means is that the hegemonic discourses do not enable the subaltern to be heard in her own terms, as “speaking and hearing complete the speech act” (Spivak 1996a, 292). When the subaltern Third World Woman is represented within the hegemonic discourse of development in ways that are meaningful to the Western audiences, she is, with Spivak’s logic, necessarily silenced. An example of the contradictions between the subaltern’s intention to speak and the outcome of her being heard, which was widely debated among anthropologists, was the ‘case’ of Rigoberta Menchú. Her written testimony (I, Rigoberta Menchú) brought indigenous grassroots experience of the Guatemalan civil war to the awareness of the international community, leading to her Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. However, Menchú was soon proven to have exaggerated the ‘authenticity’ of her story: not all she had described in the testimony had happened to her personally, and unlike she had claimed, her family was not poor but relatively wealthy, and she had been educated and spoke Spanish. (See e.g. Gossen 1999; Stoll 1999; Wood 2001.) Her authenticity as a spokesperson for the silenced, poor Maya people was questioned as she no longer fit the Western preconception of an ‘authentic native.’ But even more importantly, as Wood (2001) notes, the Western spectators had to face that the subaltern woman had had the power to manipulate them by abusing their preconceptions, as she “painted herself thick with authenticity” (438), knowing that was the only way the audience would hear her.
The problem is not in *how* the Third World Woman could be represented respectfully, but in the colonial act of representation itself (Spivak 1988 & 1996a). The problem of representation occurs not only in organisational communication, but also in the academic critique that intends to give voice to the subaltern. For example, Spivak (1996b) criticises the Subaltern Studies Group (which she was a founder of and endorses from many other perspectives) – which aspires to write an alternative historiography of South Asia from the subaltern, instead of the colonial ‘elite,’ perspective – for adhering to an essentialist notion of subalternity without engaging enough in reflexivity, and especially, for an essentially masculine understanding of ‘subaltern consciousness.’

With these deficiencies, Spivak argues that the group disregards the fact that the subaltern point of view cannot be heard. (Hiddleston 2009; Mendoza 2016, 10; Spivak 1996b.) Academics who discuss ‘Third World issues’ often unintentionally deprive the subaltern subjects of their voice (Hiddleston 2009, 156) – and as Kapoor (2004, 637) notes, “denying subalterns’ subordination, in effect, reinforces their subalternity.” In development, attempts at veiling colonising representations of the ‘Third World Women’ behind narratives that are seemingly de-colonising, such as representations of ‘empowered’ women whose stories are directly quoted, the elite/subaltern composition only gets reinforced, albeit better disguised (ibid.).

Working in international development necessarily positions us within a development discourse, which largely builds on the colonial heritage and the ideological taken-for-granted ideas of progress that have been discussed (Kapoor 2004). Arturo Escobar (2012 [1995]) has taken the discussion on the colonial problematics of representation to a more grounded level than Spivak, who has been criticised for complex critique that is only paralysing in practice (Kapoor 2004, 639). Escobar harshly critiques the development discourse that is necessarily colonising, but rarely questioned: “Perhaps no other idea has been so insidious, no other idea gone so unchallenged, as modern [development] planning” (Escobar 2012, 194). He calls for challenging this discourse by “unmaking development,” by which he means dismantling and discontinuing with the development discourse and all practices within it – which would unmake the ‘Third World’ as we have learnt to understand it, and destabilise the colonial foundation for the dichotomous discourse (ibid.). For Escobar, abandoning ‘development’ as we know it is the only way to de-colonisation – which Kapoor (2004, 640), following Spivak, criticises for “throwing
the baby out with the bathwater by being uncompromisingly ‘anti-development.’” However, following Mohanty’s (1991b) logic in feminist critique, Escobar notes that the projects of deconstruction and reconstruction need to take place simultaneously in a cultural struggle for creating balanced discursive systems (Escobar 2012, 16).

The modernity/coloniality/de-coloniality approach that Escobar represents, differs in many ways from Spivak’s take on subaltern theory, although they share the mission of challenging the hegemonic discourse and enabling the silenced Third World subject to speak. As Spivak focuses mostly on discussing the necessity of de-colonising academic knowledge production, Walter Mignolo (2010b), Escobar’s peer in the approach, argues that de-coloniality reaches further than this in its call for “pluri-versality as a universal project” (306–307), or using the ‘grammar’ of de-coloniality in all knowledge production, not only academic. The academics within the modernity/coloniality/de-coloniality approach consider capitalism at the root of coloniality, arguing that colonialism made capitalism possible (Mendoza 2016, 14). María Lugones (2010), who has theorised on de-coloniality from a feminist perspective, argues that the dichotomous hierarchy of human and non-human was not only imposed to create the distinction between the coloniser and the colonised, but also between men and women. In her view (which is criticised for romanticising indigenous cultures; Mendoza 2016), ‘gender’ was a powerful tool to create antagonism among the colonised in Latin America, as she argues that the hierarchical gender system did not exist in indigenous societies. Heteronormative and essentialist understanding of men and women, argues Lugones, is thus just another implication of coloniality that is embedded in the capitalist world order. Therefore, not only ‘development,’ which is built on the colonial division of the world, but also ‘gender,’ which is built on the colonial division of men and women, should be de-colonised. (Lugones 2010; Mendoza 2016.)

Deconstructing gendered development within the capitalistic discourse by de-colonising knowledge is not simple, and it is not a ‘new tool’ to support disciplinary academic critique. As Mignolo (2010a, 11) puts it, thinking de-colonially is “a force that permeates all the disciplines as well as common sense guiding global struggles not just ‘against capitalism’ but toward the making of a world no longer ruled by the colonial matrix of power.” De-colonising development as a discursive entity that produces knowledge means to create space for alternative, equal knowledges, while abandoning the supremacy
of the hegemonic knowledge of development. This is to go further from ‘development alternatives’ (e.g. sustainable development), and give room for discussion on ‘alternatives to development’ (Escobar 2012).

Spivak, too, considers possible that the subaltern Third World Woman could speak through the de-colonisation of knowledge, as she argues that privilege can be “unlearned as one’s loss” that has prevented us from gaining “knowledge that we are not equipped to understand by reason of our social positions” (Landry & MacLean 1996, 4). However, Spivak (1996b) is more optimistic than the modernity/coloniality/de-coloniality academics about the possibility of change from within the established discourse, as she argues that it is not even possible to challenge the hegemonic discourse ‘as an outsider’ as one is always situated within it. Kapoor (2004), drawing from Spivak’s theorisation, challenges Escobar and his peers for their obsession with deconstructing development and reconstructing it locally, arguing that it is a utopian and even counter-productive aspiration as one cannot escape the influences of the established power structures. This critique is somewhat supported by studies from the few countries that have started revolutionary transformations towards de-colonising the state, and thus creating ‘alternatives to development.’ In Bolivia, notes Ranta (2018), the process towards a grassroots-centred, de-colonised state has stumbled in implementation, as the neoliberal rationalities that the state is supposed to provide an alternative to, persist in the practical level of everyday policy. Counter to the ambition, the practices thus continue reproducing forms of coloniality. (Ibid.) To avoid reinforcing subalternity by denying colonial subordination – which is what Spivak (1996a; 1996b & 1999) and Kapoor (2004) ultimately criticise the de-colonial attempts of deconstruction and reconstruction for – it is essential to reflexively acknowledge one’s complicity in the hegemonic discourse. Only then can the process of de-colonisation start through unlearning privilege, even from “within the belly of the beast” (ibid. 640). This process is crucial to building just frameworks for development, in which the subaltern would not be represented, but heard.

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10 In Bolivia and Ecuador (and with alterations, Nicaragua), the indigenous concept translated to Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien (Living Well) has been incorporated to the constitutions as a local value-based alternative to neoliberal globalisation (Ranta 2018).
3 The framework for NGO fundraising in Finland

Some scholars argue that there has been an emergence of new trends in development in the 21st century, as the traditional paradigm tensions between the Washington consensus and the Keynesian approach have evolved into a new era. The Washington consensus stands behind market-led approaches to development, and is led by neoliberal development institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. The Keynesian approach, on the other hand, sees state-centred and rights-based approaches most productive for development, and is supported for example by UNDP and other UN agencies. (Pieterse 2009, 30.) In today’s mixture of these approaches, international competition for private donations has become harsh between development organisations in the globalising NGO scheme that relies increasingly on private donors (Aldashev & Verdier 2009). In Finland, the case has been particularly so, as the political framework within which NGOs operate, has built pressure towards increasing private funding.

The Finnish model for government–NGO relations is collaborative in a sense that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Finland provides most of the funds for many NGOs, and for example Kepa, the umbrella organisation for Finnish civil society organisations, is almost fully funded by the MFA. However, none of the NGOs are completely funded by the state, as one of the requirements for public funding is that the organisations also have solid fundraising of their own. (Siitonen 2014.) However, the NGOs’ public funding has undergone some of the Finnish NGO history’s most dramatic changes in the past years, under the right-wing government that came into power in 2015. In the government budget for 2016, 43% of the public funding for development NGOs was abruptly suspended as part of governmental budget cuts. This was a shock to NGOs in a country that has pledged to reach the global Official Development Assistance (ODA) target level of 0.7% as a proportion of GNI. In 2014, the Finnish ODA level had been 0.57%, but dropped to 0.38% in 2016. (Formin 2017; Kepa 2017a.)

After the budget cuts, the importance of private fundraising has increased among Finnish NGOs. According to a study (Taloustutkimus 2016), 39% of Finnish NGOs stated that in 2016, they will focus the most on generating private donations in all their fundraising, whereas in 2014, only 25% had stated private donations as their main fundraising investment. The study also shows that the number of NGOs that have outsourced private
fundraising to advertising or communications agencies has increased since the budget cuts (from 7% in 2014, to 13% in 2016) – almost perfectly correlating with the increased perception of competition with other NGOs (from 7% in 2014, to 12% in 2016). (Ibid.) Some small NGOs have raised concerns about the increasing competition in the private fundraising ‘markets,’ as they are in a disadvantaged position compared to larger players (Kepa 2016; Kontinen et al. 2017, 33). In addition to the increasing importance of individual private donors, private corporations are increasingly collaborating with NGOs and funding their causes. Almost half of Finnish NGOs considered individual donations their most important source of funds in the past year in 2016, and almost a third mentioned that to be cooperation with companies (Taloustutkimus 2016). (Kepa 2016 & 2017c; Kontinen et al. 2017.) For example, Women’s Bank cooperates with several companies that are promoted in their events (WB 2018a), and Plan International Finland divides their extensive cooperation with companies into three levels: strategic partners, Plan’s ‘friends,’ and Plan supporters (Plan 2018b).

However, besides safeguarding their development work financially, another important function for development NGOs within the Finnish society is to keep the Finnish publics informed about global development. As the NGO umbrella organisation Kepa phrases it in their report;

The role of NGOs is important in the public mindset in Finland. NGOs’ global education activities, development communication, volunteer opportunities, and grassroots contacts with people in the Global South enhance Finnish people’s global accountability. (Kepa 2015, my translation.)

However, a study commissioned by the MFA of Finland (Taloustutkimus 2015) shows that the general understanding of global development issues is remarkably outdated. For example, only 2% of Finnish citizens knew correctly that over 95 girls start primary school per 100 boys in the Global South, whereas the majority (58%) guessed the number was about half of that (which was the most pessimistic option provided). All the themes in the study follow the same pessimistic pattern: 76% of Finns thought falsely that there are more people living in extreme poverty than in 1990, and the majority estimated that only 50–60% of women globally have access to effective contraception (whereas around 90% do). (Ibid.) These results indicate that the development communication that has reached the Finnish audiences has not been productive for generating comprehensive knowledge. However, although the Finnish public knowledge of development is
generally outdated, the overall opinion on development cooperation has been increasingly positive in the past years (Formin 2018a), and people’s willingness to donate and do volunteer work has slightly increased after the 2016 budget cuts (Kepa 2017c).

The assumption underpinning the problem-setting of this thesis is that NGOs’ increasingly competitive, outsourced and commercialised public communication in the form of fundraising, plays part in constructing outdated and pessimistic knowledge of the Global South. As another study shows, Finns who donate to any cause, get the necessary information on the causes primarily from the NGOs’ social media feeds (25% of respondents), and web pages (24% of respondents), in addition to for example NGOs’ e-mail and physical newsletters. (Taloustutkimus 2017). Online fundraising communication not only generates donations, but also produces knowledge for spectator-donors. As fundraising gets increasingly outsourced and competition between NGOs increases, the Finnish development scheme is moving towards functioning within capitalistic market logic, which Johansson (2017) calls the ‘markets of doing good.’

Moving towards the necessity of generating funds as much as – and as fast as – possible, there is a growing need for scrutiny over how Finnish NGOs represent the issues they work with. Kepa is probably the most active watchdog and guideline provider on issues related to how development in the Global South is addressed and represented in Finland, although it was also severely affected by the budget cuts and had to cut operations. Kepa represents over 300 civil society organisations in Finland, most of which are small, local organisations, but some of which are parts of large, international NGOs (INGOs), such as Plan International Finland. Kepa organises trainings in advocacy and communications for NGOs working in development policy advocacy (Kepa 2017b), it offers free and open-to-all material for advocacy trainings for NGO employees (Nilsson 2016), and conducts research on NGOs’ realities within their changing funding frameworks (e.g. Kepa 2016 & 2017c). The most comprehensive guide for addressing the subjects of development work in the Global South is Kepa’s publication Enhancing Southern Voices in Global Education, which, although meant for global education use, is a rather inclusive take on the problematics of representing people in the Global South (Konttinen & Vihriälä 2014).

The overview of the changing Finnish NGO funding framework provided in this chapter gives essential context for the empirical research I will next move to. The three NGOs
whose fundraising campaigns I will scrutinise, were all effected by the governmental budget cuts, although to different extents. Thus, they all have faced, and were still facing during the research process, the need to respond to the outside forces that define their operational frameworks. Before introducing the campaigns and main findings against the theoretical context earlier provided, though, it is necessary to lay out how the data was collected and analysed.

4 Methods, data, and ethnographic methodology

We never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves.

–John Berger, Ways of seeing (1987, 9)

Research methods are techniques of data collection, data analysis, and research enquiry, and they exist within broader philosophical and theoretical frameworks, which are referred to as methodologies (Brewer 2000, 28). As my assumption that lays the foundations for the societal importance of this thesis is that NGO campaign imaginaries play part in constructing public knowledge about development, as was discussed in the previous chapters, I used an ethnographic methodological approach to scrutinise this process of knowledge production. Ethnography traditionally follows humanistic model of social research, as it studies social phenomena as they are experienced and given meaning to in their given settings. It is often opposed to the natural (or positivist) model of social research, which aspires to find objective social structures and rules reducible to quantitative data. (Ibid. 27–37.) Berger’s quote in the epigraph crystallises the subjective process of seeing and meaning-making, which essentially underpins the entire problem-setting of this thesis. However, the same idea of the unavoidable subjectivity in seeing is made explicit in the ethnographic approach, as the researcher is necessarily positioned in a unique relation to the object of study, which essentially guides the research process.

In this chapter, I will clarify the methods used (tools for collecting and analysing the data) against the methodology followed (theories of how research should proceed) throughout the research process. I will elaborate on the methodological framework of multi-sited ethnography, which resulted useful as my field consisted not only of multiple locations, but also of multiple levels or sites where meaning is created for campaign imaginaries.
Within the ethnographic methodological framework, I will present and reflect upon the research methods used for collecting and analysing the data: interviews, participant observation, document analysis, discussions, online data sampling, and qualitative and visual discourse analysis. First, however, I will make explicit my position in relation to the study, and explain the ethical challenges and choices that have led to the outcome of this thesis.

4.1 Reflections

In discussing (the infeasible) objectivity in qualitative research, Wolcott (1995) replaces the term ‘hypothesis’ with ‘bias.’ According to him, bias is not only inevitable in research, but also necessary for the stimulation of inquiry needed for generating research questions. The only way to prevent bias from excessively interfering with the reliability of the research, is to make it explicit. (Ibid. 164–165.) This is a widely-accepted view in ethnographic research, which usually gives less weight to following specific steps in research, and more to providing comprehensive and reflexive context surrounding the research (Harrison 2018, 88). Thus, I need to make explicit my bias in this research by reflecting upon my position within it, and how it has changed during the research process.

I had my first touch of the grassroots work of a large development organisation in 2015, when I was part of a student research team in a UniWASH project, a collaboration between Unicef Finland and Unicef Uganda, three universities in the two countries, and a selection of private enterprises. As I conducted anthropological fieldwork for the project in Northern Uganda for two and a half months, I found myself frustrated at times with the contradictions between the complexities of the grassroots realities and work, and how simplified and polished that work was when represented to the Finnish financiers. This frustration inspired me to study more how NGOs represent their development work to Finnish audiences, although I had to abandon the idea of using the UniWASH project as my empirical example for ethical reasons. As I had already written my Bachelor’s thesis in anthropology on the discursive representations of women in the Women’s Bank website, the topic of gendered representations in campaigns seemed a natural continuum for the theoretical knowledge I already possessed.
Besides having studied the Women’s Bank website for my Bachelor’s thesis, I had no previous connections to Women’s Bank or the Finn Church Aid (FCA). Out of the three NGOs whose campaigns I ended up selecting as my empirical examples, I only had some connection to Plan International Finland (Plan). I volunteered for Plan in their immigrant integration work in 2017, mentoring young immigrants on political advocacy skills in the Finnish policy context. Although due to the volunteering experience I knew some Plan employees and was somewhat familiar with the organisation from before, I considered their Finland-based integration work separated enough from their international development work for this not to cause ethical considerations. I did not use my connections to reach prospective informants from Plan, nor did I inform the Plan interviewees of my volunteering history before the interview.

I selected the three empirical example campaigns primarily for their causes, as all shared the overall objective of raising funds for work on women’s or girls’ rights, and secondarily for their coverage (all were advertised rather densely), and their simultaneous timing (all were operative in autumn 2017). However, having already researched Women’s Bank’s website communication made it easier for me to consider including their campaign in the research. Additionally, the *Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old* campaign by Plan seemed especially relevant, as it had received controversial responses from the public and provoked discussion. Solidarity’s campaign, however, was familiar to me only from their visible street-level face-to-face fundraising, and out of the three organisations, I was the least aware of Solidarity’s development work beforehand. After reaching out to the managements of Solidarity, Plan, and Women’s Bank, they all agreed to co-operate and give interviews. Although Women’s Bank is not an NGO as such but a ‘volunteer community’ administered by FCA, I decided to only focus on Women’s Bank instead of its parent NGO, as Women’s Bank was the operative entity behind the campaign. However, for the sake of clarity, I refer to all three entities behind the campaigns as NGOs, and when doing so, I always refer to Women’s Bank as a semi-autonomous entity inseparable from its parent NGO’s values and objectives.

As often happens in qualitative research (Wolcott 1995, 160) and especially ethnography (Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski 2008, 190), my fieldwork was re-designed many times whilst conducting it. I started from a critical stance – or bias – towards common NGO imaginaries of women and girls, with a preconception that NGOs tend to use victimising
visual representations of them. Thus, my initial focus was more on ‘victimisation,’ and how women and girls are visually represented in NGO campaigns. However, after some of the data collection, I was forced to review my initial research questions. Was my approach adequate for generating new insights? Would this thesis be interesting for the NGOs; or was I only repeating the almost saturated discussion on ‘respectful representation,’ which most of the NGO interviewees seemed very aware of (as will be discussed)? I understood that although my initial approach was essential to the study, more focus should be given to the structural frameworks within which the discussion on representation takes place. By doing so, I could better ground the study to its time and place and give it more relevance, as there was not much written about Finnish NGO fundraising after the 2016 governmental budget cuts in development. This also made me relate to NGOs’ agency in the issue of representation in a slightly different light, as my critical approach expanded from only looking at the NGOs, to including the structures in which they (must) operate.

I faced perhaps the most challenging ethical consideration towards the end of the research process, when analysing the data and drawing conclusions. Having myself at times felt frustrated at the academic mode of critical discourse, which (as was mentioned before as one critique of Spivak’s theorisation; Kapoor 2004) is deeply critical but paralysing in practice, my intention had been to build critical analysis as constructively as possible. However, as will become evident by the end of this thesis, I began to understand that the changes that my conclusions pursued, could not be reached only by providing pragmatic instructions for NGOs. Instead, I found my critique more structural, and from the perspective of individual NGOs that need to collect funds for securing their work, perhaps not as constructive as the initial objective had been. As a strong supporter of development cooperation, my intention was and is not to provide arguments for those against it. Thus, it needs to be explicitly pointed out that the critical discussion this thesis promotes, serves the same agenda as the NGOs under empirical scrutiny: to improve global gender equality. As Elina Hirvonen (2018), an author and documentarist, notes (in commenting the Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old campaign): “To be criticised is not a threat to development cooperation, but a challenge to do it better, more equally, and with recognition of the blind spots” (my translation).
4.2 Multi-sited ethnography

Ethnography is a methodological approach traditionally used by anthropologists and qualitative sociologists to gain deep (‘thick’) understanding of a culture, or a specific socio-cultural phenomenon within a group, through conducting lengthy single-site fieldwork (Harrison 2018, 3–6; Marcus 1995). As Bronislaw Malinowski, the “founding father of modern ethnography” (Harrison 2018, 10), famously put it, the goal of ethnography is to “grasp the native’s point of view” (Malinowski 1922, 25; cited in Harrison 2018, 14). However, ethnography is today applied inter-disciplinarily also to less exotic pursuits to understand people’s reasoning and behaviour in their given contexts – for example, in studies of organisational discourse (Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski 2008). Although there is continuous debate over where the ‘line’ between ethnography and other forms of qualitative research should be drawn (Harrison 2018, 3), there is a broad consensus on ethnographic research necessarily including at least the methods of participant observation, and interviewing (Harrison 2018; Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski 2008; Wolcott 1995, 70–71). As interviews are important for understanding people’s perceptions of the questions studied, ethnographers do not consider them sufficient on their own, as people do not necessarily act the way they say or think they act. Hence, participant observation is the tool to complement interview data – or vice versa – to gain as holistic understanding of the researched phenomenon as possible. (Harrison 2018, 21; Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski 2008, 189.)

George E. Marcus introduced the concept of multi-sited ethnography in 1995, challenging the Malinowskian ideal of a single-site and minimum 1-year-long fieldwork (Marcus 1995; Wolcott 1995, 77). As he argues, social phenomena today cannot be studied without moving between interconnected sites physically and/or conceptually (Marcus 1995). Although his idea was considered radical by many anthropologists of the traditional school, multi-sited ethnography is now widely accepted and used in the increasingly interconnected and global world (Falzon 2009; Marcus 2009). My ethnographic fieldwork consisted of sites no more exotic than Internet sites and physical locations in Helsinki, but combining multiple sites contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomenon.
Instead of scrutinising each of my fieldwork sites (for example the three different NGOs, their online sites, street-level sites of campaigning, and the sites of different levels of planning and decision-making within each NGO) separately, I found more useful to use a conceptual division of fieldwork sites. Following Gillian Rose’s (2016, 19–38) methodological division of images, I have divided the campaigns studied into three sites in which their meaning is created: the site of production, the site of the campaign itself, and the site of audiencing. The site of production implies in this research the NGOs and the contexts from which they produce the campaigns. I have studied this site by interviewing nine NGO representatives and studying the NGOs’ public documents, and analysed these against the background of the general NGO fundraising context in Finland. The site of the campaign itself (or as in Rose’s [ibid.] original division, the image itself) implies here the campaign imaginaries as the images, rhetoric, and the representations made: who represents and what; which visual and rhetorical forces are used; etc. The campaign images and narratives were analysed with qualitative and visual discourse analysis tools, against the theoretical background earlier discussed. The site of audiencing refers to the site in which spectator-donors create meaning for the imaginaries they ‘consume.’ I have used participant observation, short interviews with donors, and informal discussions to gain understanding of the last site.

4.2.1 Site of production: NGO interviews and documents

I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine representatives of the selected NGOs: two from Plan; two from Solidarity; and five from Women’s Bank (two paid employees, and three volunteers in high positions in the executive/steering committees). In addition, I interviewed one expert in the Finnish NGO scheme, outside of the three organisations. The interviews lasted between 0.5 and 1.5 hours, and all except for the expert interview were recorded and transcribed. I had planned an interview schedule (a list of questions) separately for each interview, according to the NGO and the interviewee’s position, and sent the questions beforehand via e-mail to those that requested them. However, as often is the nature of semi-structured interviews (Brewer 2000, 63), I aimed to keep the interviews as casual and open as possible, keeping the original questions as a guiding framework, but following the themes that seemed close to each respondent. Additionally, I used NGO documents such as public annual reports to supplement the interview data, and to gain better understanding of each NGO’s financial and operative realities.
As some interviewees requested to remain anonymous, and I wanted to remain at a rather general level in the analysis, I have left all interviewees anonymous throughout the analysis. When referring to a single opinion or when a quote is provided, it is always clarified which NGO the speaker represents, and discretionarily clarified which position they speak from (for example in the Women’s Bank’s case this is necessary, as some interviewees were volunteers, and some paid employees). All quotes from the interviews are my translations from Finnish to English. After transcribing the interviews, I coded their themes and content using ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis program, which made the analysis substantially easier. I ended up with 37 codes, which helped in finding thematic similarities and differences between the NGO interviews.

My intention for the NGO interviews was to get interviewees from similar positions, who would be equally connected to or behind the chosen campaigns. However, this resulted challenging, as the organisations had very distinct structures: for example, the person in charge of *Women’s Bank Walk* was a volunteer, and only part of the campaign designing was done in the Women’s Bank office, which only had two paid employees. For the sake of Women’s Bank’s rather fragmented organisational nature with active volunteers, I had more interviewees from there than from the other two organisations, to get a better understanding of the shared values and perceptions on Women’s Bank’s fundraising work (which covers all their work in Finland). From Solidarity, I had two interviews with employees from executive positions who were behind the *Uncut* campaign, and those interviews resulted rich as the interviewees were in positions to provide reasoning for their decision-making and choices. From Plan, however, I did not manage to get interviews with people in executive positions, but one interview together with two employees who were part of Plan’s communications team, and had carried out most of the *Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old* campaign’s communication. Although they provided me with valuable information about the media and communications aspect of the campaign, and about the guidelines and codes Plan follows in its campaign communication, the interviewees were not in positions to provide deeper information on why certain choices were made, and what the decision-making processes behind the campaign were. It was clear that Plan had the strictest rules on not revealing ‘business secrets,’ as the interviewees had been given orders on what could be shared about the campaign. This made the Plan interview perhaps the most challenging for me. However,
I have supplemented the data on Plan’s site of production with a public interview on the national radio (Yle 2018b), in which the director of sales, marketing and loyalty of Plan was interviewed together with an academic critic of the campaign (Dr. Faith Mkwesha). The podcast interview provided some additional information on the reasons and values behind the campaign, from the executive point of view.

4.2.2 Site of the campaign itself: visual and online data

In studying the campaigns ‘as they were delivered,’ it was necessary to combine quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. As social networking sites provide the main platforms for NGO campaigning today (Lovejoy & Saxton 2012; Madianou 2013) and were the main channels for Finnish NGOs to communicate their work in 2016 (Taloustutkimus 2016), it was necessary to gather data from the online sites used in the campaigns. Although the aim of the study was not to compare the campaigns, I needed to get similar samples of the three campaigns’ public online activity, for the same question to be addressed: how is the campaign advertised to the online audiences?

After going through all social media channels used in the campaigns (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn), I deduced that Facebook was the most used for all, and the best source of data, as publications in other sites tended to be shared or abstracted from Facebook.

There were challenges in gathering relevant data from Facebook, as it was sometimes not easy to separate which publications were campaign ‘advertisements:’ for example, sometimes more than one campaign was promoted in the same publication; and some publications did not clearly focus on the campaign but loosely referred to it only by using the campaign ‘hashtag’ or pictures related to it. I chose only those publications that I interpreted as primarily promoting or advertising the selected campaigns; although in the case of Plan, I also included publications that referred primarily to the concept of Every Girl’s Rights, which was the more advocative umbrella concept for the Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old campaign (as will be more elaborated in the analysis). I selected 20 most recent Facebook publications from each of the three campaigns, counting back from the 25th of September 2017 (see appendices 1, 2 & 3). I then analysed these samples of social media publications with the help of the qualitative data analysis program.
ATLAS.ti, coding them based on how the different actors (Global South subjects/ the NGO/Finnish spectator-donors) were represented and discursively positioned in each.

Adding to the Facebook publications, the campaigns’ web pages were important sources of data, as those are the two most used single channels that Finnish NGOs use to communicate their work (Taloustutkimus 2016). *Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old* (Plan 2017a) and *Uncut* (Solidaarisuus 2017) had web pages of their own; however, *Women’s Bank Walk* did not have its own web page, but was referred to and advertised in different locations in the Women’s Bank website. However, as the event-campaign did not raise funds for a separate cause – as Solidarity and Plan did in their campaigns – but for Women’s Bank’s work in general, I included relevant parts of Women’s Bank website in the data.

The websites were, in all cases, supplementary to social media advertising and street-level campaigning. The campaign websites provided more advocative information on the campaign causes – statistics and stories ‘from the field’ – that spectators and prospective donors could look up after the main campaign pictures and slogans had evoked their interest. Although the information the campaigns provided in their websites was important data, I reasoned that the most visible and concise parts of the campaigns weigh more in constructing public knowledge than the more elaborate information in the websites. The main pictures and slogans are exposed also to those spectators who passively stumble upon them, but do not actively seek more information, and as such, they reach a wider audience than the more elaborative parts of the campaigns. For analytic purposes, I distinguished the fast and concise ‘fundraising communication’ as the most visible parts of the campaigns, from ‘advocative communication,’ which I refer to as the more elaborate information the campaigns provide in their websites or behind the links in their social media. This separation is used in the data analysis whenever it is necessary to distinguish the levels of audiencing that the communication is targeted at.

After collecting the campaign data with abovementioned methodological tools, I used qualitative and visual discourse analysis to make sense of it. Rose (2016, 27–29) provides a useful, albeit technical approach to analysing images’ effects, as she argues that visual compositionality plays a crucial role in the process of meaning-making. Although my focus was not in the formal components of campaign images – such as framing, lighting,
and angles – I have taken some important components into account in the analysis. As Koobak (2009, 78) notes, the “myth of photographic truth” that sees an image as a copy of reality persists, which highlights the importance of discussing the power of visual representation and composition. The visuals (photographs, videos, and graphic designs), the rhetoric, and the informative content that is communicated to the audiences, together create imaginary narratives that are designed in the site of production to stimulate certain responses in the site of audiencing (Rose 2016). The implications, representations and meanings of the imaginaries were analysed against the theoretical framework discussed in chapter 3. Overall, the site of the campaign itself was at the core of the empirical research: whereas the NGO interviews and reports provided information on the imaginaries the NGOs strive for in their campaigns, analysing the produced content delivered to the audiences provided interesting support/contrast for the triangulation of data.

4.2.3 Site of audiencing: participant observation

The site where the spectator-donor audiences create meaning for the campaigns was the most challenging to grasp, as with the limited resources at hand, it would have been impossible to study how the heterogeneous group of the ‘Finnish public’ is affected by the three campaigns. However, as I abandoned the need to make any generalisations on the spectator-donor audiences, it was still necessary to gain some overall understanding on people’s perceptions of the campaigns, and the topics of NGO campaigning and representation in general. For this, I conducted participant observation in events connected to the campaigns, where donors, volunteers, and other dedicated people could concretely ‘join the cause.’ Additionally, I have drawn insight from casual conversations outside of the spatially defined or planned field sites, as I discussed the example campaigns and the topic in general with people (friends and acquaintances) whenever possible.

I participated in two events in the autumn of 2017: Women’s Bank Walk on the 10th of September, and Plan’s Girls’ Day Breakfast on the 11th of October, the International Girls’ Day. Although the latter was not directly connected to the Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old campaign, the event was a good opportunity to observe and gain better insight on how Plan presents their girls’ rights –themed work. The event was, however, not a
fundraising event nor promoted openly to larger audiences, which rendered it less relevant for the research than the *Women’s Bank Walk*, which was Women’s Bank’s highlight of the year from a fundraising perspective. Whereas Plan and Solidarity focused more on online campaigning throughout the campaigns, Women’s Bank invested (although not financially, as the event was held with volunteer and pro bono force) mostly on street-level campaigning on the campaign-event day. Therefore, online data from *Women’s Bank Walk* was proportionally less rich than from the other two campaigns, and I compensated this with more participant observation and interviews in the Women’s Bank case.

The *Women’s Bank Walk* concept was to walk either a five- or a two-kilometre route around Helsinki’s central bay Töölöri (the walks were different lengths in other locations). Although the walk itself did not take very long, there was program throughout the day, which I will discuss in the data analysis chapter. I participated in the 5 km walk and all the events before and after the walk, and talked to many participants and volunteers throughout the event. I recorded short interviews with three volunteers and five participants, all of which were conducted in an open, conversational manner to understand their motives for joining, their perceptions of the campaign, and of Women’s Bank (and other development organisations) in general.

Although I gained a lot of rich data observing and talking to people who supported Women’s Bank’s agenda, as well as observing people committed to Plan’s girls’ rights–themed work, I lacked such data from Solidarity as they did not have relevant public events during the time of my data collection. Additionally, I lacked data on the views and perceptions of spectator-donors who do not ‘concretely’ get involved in the campaign causes (who most likely, are in the majority). For future research, it would be interesting to engage more in the site of audiencing by conducting ethnographic ‘consumer research’ among the Finnish spectator-donor publics, to gain deeper understanding of how campaign imaginaries are given meaning to on a larger scale. This was done for example by Dogra (2012) in the context of the UK, as she interviewed random citizens about how they perceived different NGO campaign advertisements.
5 The campaigns

The already briefly introduced campaigns that were selected as empirical data were Uncut (Solidarity); Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old (Plan); and Women’s Bank Walk (Women’s Bank/FCA). The three campaigns were all operative at the time of my data collection, between August and November 2017, although the intensity of campaigning varied between them. Uncut had been operative from the beginning of 2016 and had thus a long-term presence in the NGO’s fundraising. The campaign had a website of its own (Solidaarisuus 2017), and active face-to-face fundraising during the summers. Plan’s Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old (Maternity Wear hereafter) was only visible on the street level for a limited period in September 2017, when it was most intensively active out of the three campaigns. Almost all traces of the Maternity Wear campaign have by the summer of 2018 been withdrawn online, as the website was removed after the campaign, and the campaign videos have been removed from YouTube. Women’s Bank Walk (WB Walk hereafter) was an event-campaign held in September but advertised densely already weeks before, and as an annual fundraising event, it had a different nature from the two other campaigns.

The three campaigns had distinct starting points, means, and objectives, although all shared the overall goal of generating funds for work towards gender equality in the Global South. Their most distinctive difference that needed to be considered in the research was their difference in budgets: WB Walk was delivered with zero budget; Uncut with a substantial budget for a small Finnish NGO but not compared to Maternity Wear, which had behind it an INGO that has long history of investing considerably in marketing and campaigning. Instead of comparing rather incomparable empirical examples, my aim was to better understand the reasoning behind the choices of representation, rhetoric, and narratives that the NGOs create through the campaigns; and how these choices reflect the outside forces that build framework for NGO fundraising in Finland. I will now present the main findings from each campaign, based on the data collected in all fieldwork sites. In the next chapter, I will further analyse the findings against the theoretical and contextual background.
5.1 *Uncut* – The International Solidarity Foundation

The International Solidarity Foundation (Solidarity) is a Finnish NGO founded by the Finnish Social Democrat Party in 1970. Today, Solidarity can be considered a highly professional development expert organisation, and its board members are predominantly highly educated development experts, most of which are still in some ways connected to the Social Democrat Party. The NGO’s main targets are democracy, equality and human rights, and in 2017 it was operative in Kenya, Somaliland, and Nicaragua. Solidarity’s total outturn for 2016 was about 2,8 million euros: 69% of the funds came from the MFA of Finland, and 31% from the NGO’s own fundraising. Out of the three example organisations, Solidarity’s operations were the most affected by the Finnish government’s budget cuts in development: due to the cuts, Solidarity’s outturn for development cooperation was 26% smaller in 2016 than in 2015, and the NGO was still adapting to the major changes in funding in 2017. (Solidaarisuus 2016b.) Solidarity’s action plan for 2017 mentions that fundraising targeted at private citizens will be increasingly focused on, and the growth agenda for private fundraising requires a “bold and more focused contribution” in 2017 than before. (Solidaarisuus 2016a.) *Uncut* (*Silpomaton*) was so far Solidarity’s largest fundraising campaign, and it focused on work against FGM in the Kenyan Kisii community.

As the aim of the *Uncut* campaign was to tackle violence against women by concentrating on one of the most intimate forms of gendered violence, it is obvious that the NGO had faced difficulty in how to respectfully represent the Kenyan women and girls that its work aims to support. Based on interviews with two Solidarity representatives who were connected to the campaign, the campaign’s public imageries, voices, and the presented narratives of problems and solutions were extensively thought through. The aim was to dissociate the campaign imaginaries from ‘traditional Third World imaginaries,’ which an interviewee perceived to fall into a dichotomy of either overly victimising by concentrating on suffering, or presenting Third World subjects simplistically as happy and grateful. Instead, it was highlighted in both interviews that the aim was to create more contextualised, multi-dimensional understanding of FGM; and to avoid presenting easy and quick solutions or simplifying FGM into evil actors and their feminine victims. Thus, the representations of the women and men (men’s presence in the campaign communication was considered very important) were aimed to be ‘rugged:’ for example,
the individuals represented might have before supported FGM and even had their own daughters mutilated, but learned since about the hazards of the custom, and now advocate against it. The aim of showing these kinds of moral contradictions in individuals represented was to break from glorifying or simplifying change in the grassroots level. In addition to aiming at representing the women, girls, and the people that affect their lives with a more humane spectrum of roles, another point mentioned in the interviews was not to present the work itself as simple and always successful. One articulated way to do this was to avoid using such simplifying narratives as “with 10 euros you can change the world;” but rather, to attempt to describe the work against FGM as realistically as possible: success is not always granted, and change is slow. The campaign also intended to break stereotypes of FGM in Finland: by focusing on Kenya and not Somaliland, the common misunderstanding of FGM being an Islamic problem was contested, as Kenya is a predominantly Christian country, and the Kisii community is Christian.

It was mentioned in the interviews that the Finnish donors were not to be addressed as ‘heroes’ or saviours of the Kisii women and girls in the Uncut campaign strategy, but rather, the aim was to show that the agents of change are the grassroots partner organisation, the women who have survived FGM and have become advocates against it, and the whole grassroots community. The mentioned aim was to present the abolition of FGM possible through long-term education, advocacy work, and security measures. This aim was visible in the campaign’s Facebook publications, which focused mostly on communicating grassroots activism, and the reasons and context of FGM in the Kisii community. Out of the sample of 20 Facebook publications (see Appendix 1), only one included the rather shocking campaign picture (see Figure 1); 4 focused on the importance of Finnish activism in the abolishment of FGM; and the rest were links to texts that provided more in-depth information about the experiences of FGM or interviews with grassroots activists (male and female equally).

However, it became clear both in the interviews and by analysing the site of the campaign that the abovementioned aims were sometimes conflicted with the frameworks of fundraising, as the intention of the campaign was to mobilise Finnish spectators to donate by showing startling and emotional narratives. The contradiction between the advocative aims and the delivery of fundraising communication was clear: in the web page, monthly donors were not referred to only as donors, but as “change makers,” which is perhaps not
aligned with the aim of not putting the Finnish donors on a pedestal. Additionally, the slogan which is the first thing a viewer sees in the campaign web page, emphasises the donor’s capability of making a change, and feeling good about it: “Every minute six girls are in danger of becoming victims of female genital mutilation. Join us to change the lives of thousands of girls. It can change your world.” (Solidaarisuus 2017, my translation). The provided fact of six girls being in danger of being mutilated every minute, is an appeal that Cohen (2001, 181) calls the “Single Unimaginable Fact:” it descriptively emphasises the unimaginable scale of the issue, although does not provide explanations. Definitions of the ambiguous state of ‘being in danger of becoming a victim’ are not provided, although they would give essential meaning for the ‘fact.’ Both interviewees noted contradictions between some means and aims, and mentioned that FGM is easy to ‘sell’ to audiences as it is an emotive, quite concrete problem that carries a certain shock-effect. As a very intimate issue, FGM was considered both an easy cause for fundraising, and a difficult cause ethically, as fundraising communication does not always provide the space for contesting preconceptions. It was also acknowledged that by simply avoiding victimising vocabulary or imageries, the NGO cannot wash its hands from victimising imaginaries, even in advocative communication level. Rather, when working against a cause such as FGM where vulnerability plays a great role, victimisation cannot be avoided:

- - in how [Finnish] people perceive it, it cannot be avoided that the spectator sees a victim-issue. It certainly exists. But in a way, they are victims. If we accept that the word is poor, and we don’t want to emphasise it, but we choose the path of talking about those who have survived [FGM]. That even though they have been victims once, now they are empowered role models.
The contradictions between the aims and delivery of representation can be interpreted from the campaign advertisement (Figure 1), which was chosen as the magazine advertisement of the month in May 2017 by Finland’s largest marketing and advertisement magazine Markkinointi & Mainonta (2017). The intimate, shocking and simple picture of a woman covering her genital area gets the viewer’s attention with intimacy and sex appeal. The slogan “On a knife-edge” increases the shock appeal and clarifies that the woman’s intimate parts are less sex-objectified and more victim-objectified. Although racialisation is avoided by making the skin colour of the woman rather unclear, the advertisement leans on other conventional means of NGO fundraising marketing: sexualisation and intimate exposure, shock, and the indication that an individual ‘here’ can make a change ‘there’ (where, is also left open).

It became clear in the interviews that there is a line that is difficult to cross in representing the issue of FGM ‘as it appears’ in the grassroots level. It had been a conscious decision not to give voice to those who still stand for FGM, even if it conflicts with the ideal of not simplifying complex realities. Explaining contexts that do not align with Finnish moral understanding was perceived to be important, but very difficult to communicate to audiences, especially within one campaign’s framework:

Interviewee: - - when I went to Kenya a year ago, and I interviewed those who are working [against FGM] and have themselves been mutilated, the pressure of the community became clearer [to me]. That in a sense, when a mother gives her daughter to be mutilated, it kind of makes sense in a community where women’s position is very weak to start with, so in a way… I’m not defending those actions, but if Finnish people understood that those people are not just evil. That they may face a choice that no one should face. That either you get mutilated, or completely isolated from the community. And that’s a choice we might not really understand the consequences of.

MK: Yeah. How difficult is it to communicate that to Finnish audiences?

Interviewee: Well that’s extremely difficult to communicate. It requires more long-term communication.

The speculative assumption was thus that the Finnish publics want to hear ‘quick solutions,’ and not providing them might have negative effects on fundraising. On the other hand, there was an assumption that the main target group of the campaign, around 20-30-year-old women, would be “enlightened enough not to buy into [quick solutions] anymore.” Although there was a conscious decision not to give voice to the supporters of FGM, there was an effort in the campaign’s advocative communication to understand the
phenomenon, as a Kenyan blogger for Solidarity elaborated on the cultural meanings of the habit of FGM in the web page.

Although Solidarity is a rather respected NGO in the Finnish development scheme, it is not very known among the public. Through *Uncut*, Solidarity aimed to gain more conspicuousness among the Finnish donor publics, and a key component in this aim was the use of celebrities, who the interviewees believed to bring publicity, legitimacy, and trust to the NGO. Also, emerging public interest in FGM through its increasing media attention has brought publicity to the work against FGM – starting from the photographer Meeri Koutaniemi’s first, already discussed pictorial of the FGM of Kenyan girls in 2014 (HS 2014). Both interviewees perceived Koutaniemi’s artistic work beneficial for the *Uncut* campaign and the whole NGO, as it has brought visibility and encouraged public discussion on the cause. Koutaniemi was also a celebrity ‘ambassador’ for the *Uncut* campaign. However, as the interviewees seemed to understand and take seriously the importance of deconstructing paternalistic or simplifying discourses of the Global South, some tension regarding the pictorial could also be traced in one interview. It was mentioned that Solidarity did not want to participate in the public debate regarding the ethics of Koutaniemi’s controversial pictorial. For an NGO that has struggled in gaining publicity, the only reasonable option from a fundraising perspective might be to consider any visibility for their cause beneficial.

5.2 *Women’s Bank Walk – Women’s Bank (Finn Church Aid)*

Women’s Bank is a Finnish fundraising-oriented ‘volunteer network’ founded in 2007 and administered by the NGO Finn Church Aid (FCA), and it focuses on women’s microloans and entrepreneurship programmes in the Global South. *Women’s Bank Walk (WB Walk hereafter)* is Women’s Bank’s largest fundraising campaign executed annually every September, since 2010. Women’s Bank shares FCA’s values, fundraising strategies, and even projects, and it cannot be scrutinised fully independent of its parent NGO. FCA is known for its tangible take on fundraising as one can buy an ‘alternative gift’ – a product, as it was called in an interview – such as a goat (30 €), a school uniform (8 €), or a profession (30 €) to someone in a developing country (FCA 2018). Women’s Bank and the *WB Walk* campaign focus on promoting the ‘profession’ gift that is given
to a woman in one of Women’s Bank’s 15 program countries\textsuperscript{11}, and the aim of the campaign is to collect as many ‘professions’ as possible.

The (optional) participation fee for the walk was 30 € – the price of one ‘profession’ – and with over 88 000 euros, the 2017 event managed to collect about 3000 ‘professions’ for ‘Third World Women.’ Although the theme countries (Cambodia and Uganda in 2017) change annually, the funds collected are always directed to Women’s Bank’s work in general. The annual event-campaign is executed in various locations in Finland and abroad – 70 localities in 2017 – with zero budget and only volunteer force. (WB 2017a.)

\textit{WB Walk} is a parent brand for other similar campaigns with the only conceptual variable being the type of ‘concrete doing:’ in addition to walking, there are events for example for golfing, reading, knitting, yoga, baking… i.e. any hobby that would raise interest among the Finnish target groups (two main target groups were mentioned: middle aged mothers, and retired women). Anyone can volunteer to organise such an event. The \textit{WB Walk} event in Helsinki, which I participated in, was the largest one, where participants walked around the central bay Töölönlaiti, accompanied with colourful balloons and signs to raise attention (see Figure 2). Before and after the walk, there was program such as talks of Women’s Bank success stories, and ‘cultural program’ (for example, an “African fashion show,” traditional Khmer dance, and a capoeira workshop).

As a volunteer network that has only two paid employees, Women’s Bank is constituted of people with different backgrounds and understandings of development cooperation, with varying understanding of the grassroots realities of Women’s Bank’s programs. Two interviewees were paid employees under FCA, and I consider them development professionals due to their positions and, as such, their views to represent

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure2}
\caption{Women’s Bank Walk intends to raise attention with balloons, signs and masses of people. Photo: Martta Kaskinen}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{11} In 2018: Angola, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Cambodia, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Kosovo, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, State of Palestine, Peru, Sierra Leone, and Uganda.
Women’s Bank (and FCA). Three interviewees, however, were volunteers in high positions of responsibility in the steering group and executive committee, and they did not have a background in development-related fields but were dedicated to Women’s Bank’s mission. Although due to their positions of trust they could be considered legitimate representatives of Women’s Bank, I considered that their general views of development (aid or cooperation) might not reflect those of FCA, nor did all have in-depth understanding of Women’s Bank’s work in the program countries. This said, as I consider interesting the fact itself that most fixed-term representatives of Women’s Bank (in the steering group/executive committee) are not development professionals, but primarily ‘dedicated to help,’ I will discretionarily examine all five interviews together, and separate the employed from the volunteer interviewees only when considered necessary. In addition, I will refer to the interviews with five participants and three volunteers in the *WB Walk* event as representatives of donor-volunteers who support Women’s Bank.

A key feature in Women’s Bank’s public image in campaigning that came up in all interviews was the need to stand out from ‘traditional development work,’ which was defined to imply for example victimising imageries (“children with flies in their eyes”); obscure professional jargon that focuses on political correctness; failure of projects due to not understanding grassroots realities; and financial inefficiency. The most distinguishing factor in achieving this aim of a certain uniqueness, as all noted, was mentioned to be the positive representation of Women’s Bank’s work both in the program countries, and in Finland. The slogan that many mentioned, and that was visible in the website as well, was that Women’s Bank sees and works “through joy.” As was mentioned by the FCA employed interviewees, Women’s Bank not only depicts the women in their program countries as happy and empowered, but also avoids using certain words that are considered “development terminology” such as ‘victim,’ ‘problem,’ or ‘beneficiary,’ which could be associated with the ‘traditional development work’ defined above. One part in the empowering and positive representation that was highlighted in the interviews was that women in the program countries are given a voice as they are directly quoted in stories with their names and their photos. However, it was also mentioned that the women who are given a voice are carefully pre-selected based on their stories (need to be versatile) and their outspokenness, and Women’s Bank gives conditions beforehand to what kinds of stories are given voices.
In Finland, the positive representation of the Finnish ‘Women’s Bank community,’ and especially the *WB Walk* campaign, was told to be achieved by making joining low threshold (in the event, walking is easy and optional; and one can choose which ‘Women’s Bank X’ event to join based on personal interests); and by making the event-campaign and its advertising colourful, fun, and essentially about community building. By observing in the event, and analysing the 20 selected Facebook publications (see Appendix 2), this strategy of positivity could be seen clearly. In short interviews with participants and volunteers in the event, many confirmed that Women’s Bank’s approach is appealing because it was perceived to differ from many development NGOs with its positivity (fun and easy ‘here,’ and empowering and concrete ‘there’), and the straightforwardness of personal contribution (“by participating I give a woman somewhere a profession”). These views echo the narratives in the *WB Walk* event and in the fundraising communication, where joy, simplicity, and straightforwardness were repeatedly present, and women, regardless of their position or country of origin, were without exception represented as smiling and happy. A straightforward entrepreneur attitude was present in Women’s Bank’s fundraising rhetoric: monthly donors were called “business angels” (WB 2017b), which is a term often used of individuals who invest in start-up businesses. The contrast between fundraising communication and advocative communication was not as radical as in Solidarity’s campaigning, as Women’s Bank’s informative stories from the grassroots level that were shared in the campaign’s framework, continued to follow the fundraising communication logic of presenting the work as joyful and rather simple.

*Figure 3 The “Profession head” advertising Women’s Bank Walk: a silhouette of a presumably African woman gazing down as if resigned, with symbols of different manual professions inside her head, as if her skills were waiting to be ‘unleashed’ by Women’s Bank.*
Simplicity and ‘concrete action’ were perceived to be other strategical means of distancing Women’s Bank from ‘traditional’ or more rigid development actors. Political correctness was mentioned in the interviews to be avoided by focusing on communicating to the publics transparently “as things are,” instead of focusing on the form of communication. Action, helping, and development were presented in the online advocative communication as concrete and easy. The measure unit of a ‘profession’ is the most tangible example: unlike Solidarity, which highlighted the importance of not using such rhetoric, Women’s Bank claimed that by donating 30 euros you “give a profession as a gift to a woman in the developing world” (WB 2017c). In Women’s Bank’s communication both online and in the event, attention is not given to the processes, and the explanatory connection between the 30 € walk, and a woman somewhere getting a profession remains vague, apart from the occasional mention of “vocational education.” Instead, the focus is either (more) on the joy of helping in Finland; or (less) on happiness and gratitude in the program countries (the latter only being visible in the event and in advocative communication, not in fundraising communication).

Concreteness of Women’s Bank’s work was emphasised in the festive event, as donors were not left invisible and silent, but they were actively ‘doing something’ for the cause. The distance between the woman in the receiving end and the woman (almost all participants and volunteers in WB Walk were women) in Finland, was thus seemingly narrowed. Many of the Women’s Bank interviewees and the donor-volunteer interviewees mentioned a global sisterly solidarity that is rejoiced in the event. Noteworthy is that despite seemingly narrowing the distance between the donor and the receiver, the latter remains an imaginary figure (see e.g. Figure 3). When individual ‘success stories’ were communicated, the narrative was repetitive: The Third World Woman was a victim of her local circumstances (patriarchy, poverty); then she was empowered with the help of Women’s Bank; and as her abilities were unleashed through a profession or a business, she now lives a happy life. These stories were told in the WB Walk event, and many were narrated in the Women’s Bank web page, although not in fundraising communication that distinctively marketed the event-campaign. All 20 of the campaign’s Facebook publications analysed (see Appendix 2) were about community building or giving thanks to the Finnish participants of the event, and none of the ‘success
stories’ were found there. The only two publications that did not have a picture of the colourful event (but still spoke only to the participant-donor), showed the ‘profession head’ (as it was called in the interviews) picture (Figure 3). The picture represents a woman who has the capabilities (the symbols of manual, traditionally feminine professions such as tailor and gardener) in her head but not the resources to access them. This imaginary silhouette of a Third World Woman, who resembles an African woman figure but represents all women in the four continents Women’s Bank works in, plays with stereotypes of a ‘deserving Third World Woman:’ she is (presumably) African, she is resigned (gazing down), she is invisible and voiceless, and she dreams of having a simple manual profession. However, unlike the other two NGOs’ campaign pictures, the ‘profession head’ does not lean on victimisation and shock-effect, but leaves more room for interpretation. Despite the distinct reduction of altruistic behaviour to an easy and fun hobby-like activity, and the choice of representing the women within predetermined narratives and through rather stereotypical ideas of a Third World Woman, most Women’s Bank interviewees did not trace power imbalances in their communication. Although some noted that unequal power relations exist to the extent that donors have money to give, and the women in the program countries need that money; but beyond that, all women were perceived to be represented in Women’s Bank’s work as equals.

In addition to aiming at keeping distance from what was perceived to be ‘traditional development work’ with its perceived problems and rather elitist political correctness, it was also mentioned by two Women’s Bank volunteer representatives that they try to dissociate Women’s Bank brand from any “hippie charity” or “rage feminism” associations. As it was mentioned in many interviews, most Women’s Bank members and volunteers have business backgrounds and entrepreneur mind-sets, and they are not professionals in development-related fields. While avoiding development jargon, there can be traced a lean towards business jargon: the ‘profession’ is a product and a unit of measure valued at 30 euros; donors are called ‘business angels;’ WB Walk is called the ‘parent brand’ of similar but smaller event-campaigns; and underlying all, there was a rather ideological understanding of entrepreneurship being the most effective way to development. Overall, based on the interviews, there seemed to be a common understanding of a need for more ‘concrete action’ and less bureaucratic thinking in development, to which Women’s Bank’s approach was perceived to respond.
5.3 Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old – Plan International Finland

Plan International Finland (Plan) is the Finnish office for one of the largest INGOs that focus on children’s rights, and as such, has the most established public role of the three selected NGOs in the Finnish development scheme, not to mention the largest campaign budget. Plan’s revenue was 16.9 million euros in 2017, 36% of which came from the MFA of Finland, 10% from private donations, and the rest from the child sponsorship program, EU support, and other sources (Plan 2018a). Plan was also affected by the governmental budget cuts, and had to cut operations and lay off employees in 2016 (Plan 2016). The Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old (Maternity Wear hereafter) fundraising campaign was realised in Finland only, as part of Plan’s concept Every Girl’s Rights, which is an umbrella concept for girls’ rights-themed campaigns. Every Girl’s Rights connotes the Finnish public policy of Every Man’s rights, and is part of Plan International’s global Because I am a Girl –movement. Although I will focus on the Maternity Wear campaign only, it is connected to Every Girl’s Rights in its advocative communication level, and thus my analysis will also touch the surface of the latter.

Figure 4 These ‘advertisements’ could be seen in various public locations in Finland in September 2017. Photos from Hasan & Partners advertisement agency website.
The campaign’s idea was that the famous Finnish designer Paola Suhonen designed a fashion collection for pregnant pre-teen girls – only for the campaign’s purposes and not for sale – and the photographer Meeri Koutaniemi took professional modelling shots of a pregnant 13-year-old (12 at the time of the beginning of her pregnancy) Zambian girl, Fridah, wearing the designer clothes. The photos, and real-size mannequin dummies presenting the maternity dresses, were then displayed in the Helsinki city centre as if they were really advertising the fashion collection, with a slogan “Ensure this clothing collection is not needed.” (See Figures 4 & 5.) The ‘advertisements’ were also visible in other public spaces such as bus and tram stops and of course, the social media. In the campaign web page, one could find an equally dramatic and artistic campaign video, followed by three explanatory videos about the making of the campaign, and about child pregnancies in Zambia. The Maternity Wear campaign won the annual magazine contest Edit Contest’s award for the best magazine advert in 2017 (Edit Contest 2017), and the Creative Distinct -award by the Art Directors Club of Europe (ADCE 2017). The campaign raised controversial public attention, as especially academics widely criticised the pictorial (see e.g. Yle 2018a & 2018b), but according to the interview, it was a success as Plan’s donations peaked.

A team of Plan’s employees, advertising agency (Hasan & Partners) employees, and the two central celebrities, Suhonen and Koutaniemi as the ‘ambassadors’ of the campaign’s cause, had travelled to Zambia for the campaign material. Travelling for material was mentioned to be unusual for Plan’s campaigns, as visual material is more commonly selected from Plan International’s extensive photo bank, based on photo quality, journalistic principles, appeal, and relevance to the topic. The 13-year-old Zambian girl

Figure 5 Display window for the maternity wear at Stockmann department store in the Helsinki city centre. Screenshot photo from Plan’s Facebook publication (see Appendix 3).
had been casted beforehand by the local Plan office to be the face of the campaign, and the interviewees emphasised she and her mother had understood the cause and given consent to participating (this was also emphasised in the online advocative communication). The reason for having a 13-year-old girl as a face of the campaign – although child pregnancies (under 15-year-olds) is a much more uncommon problem worldwide than teenage pregnancies (15-19-year-olds) – was explained by the interviewees for its bigger emotional and thought-provoking appeal, as Plan, like the other two organisations, wanted to stand out from ‘traditional NGO imaginaries.’ The interviewees defined these primarily as imaginaries that have faced compassion fatigue, and teenage pregnancies were perceived to fit the category. ‘Teen moms’ were described as having lost their shock appeal in human rights discussions due to the problem being normalised in the Western world for example because of reality-TV, and teenage pregnancies do not make people “stop and think” anymore. Having a 13-year-old (although the impression given by the campaign is that she was 12, which is why I will refer to her as a 12-year-old hereafter) as the face of the campaign was described in the interview to make clearer contrast to the ‘developed world.’ In the FAQ-section of the web page, the choice is explained with the need to “rouse conversation about a global problem in a surprising and interesting way” (Plan 2018c, my translation). The statistical Single Unimaginable Fact, as Cohen (2001, 181) calls it, presented in the campaign web page, was that “7 million children become mothers every year in developing regions” (Plan 2017a), which was also repeatedly provided in the campaign’s fundraising communication to support the severity of the cause (see Appendix 3 for the sample of Facebook publications). However, as an estimate that includes children under 18 years of age in countries of four continents, it does not provide explanation for the use of a Zambian 12-year-old as the representative of the figure. As women’s reproductive age is officially defined between 15 and 49 years, official statistics of child pregnancies/mothers only include children between 15 and 18 years. Thus, as it was mentioned in the interview and as was elaborated in the campaign’s advocative communication, there are no reliable statistics of child mothers under the age of 15 (most estimates, including the one Plan uses, are based on a study by Neal et al. [2012], which indicates that there are more than 2 million childbirths annually in 42 low income countries by girls under 16 years of age). This underlines that the reason for choosing a pre-teen African girl as the campaign’s face was its maximised shock effect, as Fridah’s case is not a realistic representation of a “global problem” about which Plan intended to rouse conversation.
Contrast was the overall and desired ‘catch’ in the Maternity Wear campaign. According to the interview and a campaign video in the web page, the contrast appeal was created by showing an emotionally loaded problem, child pregnancies, with terms borrowed from the Western fashion industry. As the fashion designer Suhonen explains her artistic choices in the video;

We were looking for a controversial, oppositional visual atmosphere. If you think of African prints and the colours here; we were looking for contrasts. I call it the “Hampton’s style,” meaning bright white, what we tend to see in children’s fashion world; there is that typical light blue, white, fresh, marine type of atmosphere, which is very far from the circumstances that girls live in [Zambia]. (Plan 2017a, my translation.)

Radical contrasts were also the key in the main campaign video (Plan 2017a), which was less informative and more artistic and advertisement-like than usually seen in development NGO campaign videos. The video begins with (presumably; the viewer is not informed) Zambian children swinging, drawing, playing with colourful balloons, soap bubbles and football in a dry African landscape; happy and full of laughter, with the song The Lucky One by Au Revoir Simone playing in the background. The children (not pregnant) are wearing clothes presumably designed by Suhonen, as they fit her description above of the “Hampton’s style.” Then, the song fades away and the sounds of ‘reality’ take over. The campaign model, Fridah, is showed playing hopscotch alone, and as she turns to look sternly at the camera, her light-blue designer dress does not let her pregnancy go unnoticed. The imaginary is simplified for creating the contrast: a pregnancy-free childhood is carefree, full of happiness and play; whereas a pregnant girl faces a lonely and rather miserable childhood. However, as the happy children in the video are dressed in Finnish designer clothes and play with balloons and soap bubbles – thus breaking a stereotype of an ‘African childhood’ and perhaps referring more to a Finnish childhood – their happiness, too, essentially entails Finnish intervention and represents the ‘us/them’ contrast.

Despite the campaign relying on a maximised contrast between children’s fashion world in Finland, and a Zambian girl as a victim of her circumstances, it was stated in the interview that Plan has a strictly universalist approach to representing all children equally in their work:
we have global challenges, and it is necessary to find solutions to them everywhere in the world. And improving girls’ rights is like that; we don’t want to separate between “Third World girls” and “Western girls,” but instead we see that girls’ rights – girls’ and boys’ rights – should primarily be fulfilled equally everywhere.

Plan follows their own guideline on child welfare (Plan 2017c) in their work, which is based on Plan International’s guidelines and international guidelines on representation (CONCORD 2006), and which promotes this universalist take on representing children everywhere equally. Additionally, Plan has published an art and media education guide, in which the topic of the visual representation of children in human rights issues is discussed (Plan 2010). Plan’s guideline on child welfare emphasises that children should be represented with protection and dignity (Plan 2017c), and the interviewees stated that Plan’s leading instruction on respectful representation is not to publish victimising photos or stories. Again, not showing pictures of “children with flies in their eyes” was mentioned to be important along with not photographing children from up-to-down angle; and that Plan strives for representing children in their full potential, “with eyes on the solutions rather than the problems.” The interviewees said that girls are empowered by involving them in discussions and getting their voice heard, rather than having only adults speak for them. In the campaign’s advocative communication this rhetoric is repeated, as it is stated that the campaign’s aim was to “tell about Fridah as a dignified individual, who has aspirations and dreams – not as a stereotype or an illustrator of problems” (Plan 2018c, my translation).

However, the pregnant girl is represented less as an active subject, and more as an object of artistic freedom and as a model example of what should not exist, which does not support Plan’s ethical aims. The ideal of representing the girl with eyes on solutions is not met, as all eyes are drawn to the obvious problem in Fridah’s stomach. By only scrutinising the campaign’s fundraising communication, even her nationality is left unmentioned, leaving her black skin be the only hint for the spectator to interpret her African origin. Fridah’s voice is heard in the campaign’s advocative communication only to the extent that the reader gets to know that her favourite subject in school is English, and that she wants to become a nurse (Plan 2017a). The expert voice is given to the celebrities, Koutaniemi and Suhonen, who tell the viewer facts about child pregnancies in the videos. The grassroots experts in the campaign stories are local teachers, health
care professionals, and Fridah’s mother; explaining to the viewer how the problem of child pregnancies (although all but Fridah’s mother talk about teenage pregnancies) is visible in the local level. The Plan interviewees stated that the celebrities’ voices were used as expert voices because they are easy to identify with, and draw media attention.

With the advertisement style appeal, the advertising agency’s touch is very clear in the videos and the entire campaign concept. According to the interview, all Plan’s campaigns that have a fundraising aspect are created in cooperation with an advertising agency, which was perceived to be an established practice among large development organisations in Finland. Although the interviewees were prohibited to reveal any ‘business secrets’ about how they know what appeals to the Finnish prospective donors, it was mentioned that their fundraising strategies are based on thorough in-house research. One challenge mentioned was that the audience wants to see ‘concrete’ angles to Plan’s work, which was perceived difficult sometimes as their work in general is as abstract as protecting children’s rights. The solution to this was said to be to focus on individual stories and results in communication, and to concretise their perseverance for example by providing the audience with follow-ups on how the campaign model Fridah is doing, and how Plan continues to support her.

In addition to showing the problem of child pregnancies in a rather dramatic style, the campaign provides solutions for Finnish audiences, which help making Finnish spectator-donors’ contribution more concrete than just donating. After the most important solution – donating to Plan – the next promoted step is to help the cause gain visibility through sharing publications in social media, and within one’s own networks in Finland. In the web page, the spectator is even urged to make the Every Girl’s Rights logo her Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn cover photo, and to copy-paste and publish ready ‘tweets’ provided (Plan 2017b).

The interviewees said that it is crucial to raise awareness about girls’ rights and issues such as child pregnancies in Finland, firstly because of Plan’s universalist approach which makes such issues not disconnected from Finland, and secondly because, “although improving girls’ and women’s rights has been stressed in the Finnish development policy, it still lacks concreteness and budget.” This, according to one interviewee, can be changed by promoting Plan’s agenda in the social media, which was perceived to equal to
demanding changes in the Finnish development policies. To questions of how and why visibility and attitude change in Finland is so important in improving girls’ rights in the Global South – as girls’ and women’s rights are already considered top priorities in development both in the Finnish policy level (Formin 2018b) and in the public opinion (Formin 2017) – were left without answer beyond explaining why supporting girls’ rights is essential for development in general.

6 The campaigns in the Finnish markets of altruism

I earlier presented an overview of the framework in which Finnish development NGOs function after the budget cuts that were executed in 2016, and the situation in the Finnish public awareness of development issues. It has also been discussed how the feminist, postcolonial, de-colonial and post-humanitarian critiques have shaped the academic discussion on representation in the context of development communication. The two rather contradictory forces – survival within the ‘markets of altruism’ and on the other hand, the need for de-colonising the public development discourse – provide the framework for development NGOs to design and execute their public communication. In this chapter, I will further analyse the three campaigns presented in the previous chapter, against the theoretical and contextual frameworks within which they operate. All campaigns demonstrated responses to the same forces, and showed signs of the marketisation of fundraising – although to different extents, from distinct perspectives, and with different levels of awareness.

6.1 Reasoning behind the choices of representation

In the competitive markets of private fundraising, campaigns are obviously designed to distinguish from their competitor NGOs’ fundraising campaigns. Although dissociation from ‘traditional NGO imaginary’ was an aim mentioned in interviews of all NGOs, all had different perceptions of what traditional or mainstream NGO imaginaries were, and of the ideals of representation that campaigns should strive for. All mentioned directly victimising representation as something ‘other NGOs’ tend to do but they avoid, although definitions for victimisation varied. The repetitive phrase was not to show “pictures of children with flies in their eyes,” which demonstrates that the NGOs had internalised the
post-1980s discussion on the harms of directly victimising or negative representation. However, as many seemed to consider the ethics of not using such directly victimising imageries as exceptionally ethical practice in the NGO scheme, it seems the understanding of today’s academic discussion on representation was somewhat limited. Although ‘pornographic’ imageries of suffering might still be used in humanitarian relief aid to some extent, such imageries have not been common in development NGOs after the critical discussions of the 1980s, after NGOs have had to commit to global codes of conduct to avoid such imageries (e.g. CONCORD 2006).

Although all three NGOs wanted their campaign to be distinct from others, their ethical motives for standing out varied. Solidarity seemed to be most aware of the NGO’s responsibility to inform the spectator-donors about the realities and complexities of their work, and perceived the ‘traditional NGO imaginaries’ it wanted to dissociate from primarily as simplified in the ‘negative vs. positive’ axis of representation. The contradiction between ideal communication (advocating against prejudices and simplification), and some of the realised fundraising communication (shocking, simple) was understood and reflected upon, and it seemed clear that Solidarity had had to make some ethical compromises in their attempt at increasing their public visibility. Women’s Bank, however, had almost the opposite strategy, as the avoided ‘traditional development imaginary’ was defined being largely what Solidarity strived for: complex, uncertain, and professional. In Women’s Bank, the field of development was perceived on the one hand as an elitist and bureaucratic machinery incomprehensible to the publics, and on the other hand, as charity that cannot create sustainable change and is ineffective, or even harmful. Although the first perception might not be a complete exaggeration, the second point indicates that the understanding of today’s development cooperation in Women’s Bank was quite narrow and outdated. The assumption behind Women’s Bank’s campaign imaginary, in which problems and their solutions are best found in the individual level of hard work (or helping), is a good example of Wilson’s (2011) criticism of de-politicising development, and instrumentalising poor women to legitimise a neoliberal ideological view of development.

Interestingly, Plan’s interviewees were the only ones out of the three organisations, who did not describe the avoided ‘traditional development imaginary’ in ethical or ideological terms as much as in marketing terms. Although direct victimisation was mentioned, it
was described loosely as the “children with flies in their eyes” pictures, and up-to-down photo angles. Primarily, what Plan wanted to distinguish from was overused NGO imaginaries that have faced compassion fatigue, and are not easy to ‘sell’ anymore. Plan’s take on standing out was pragmatic from a marketing perspective, as they chose to use narratives that reach the largest audience, provided that the guidelines on representation were followed. The guidelines were, however, quite loose and ambiguous: representing children with ‘protection and dignity’ (Plan 2017c) can be interpreted in many ways, as the lack of both was a central public critique of the Maternity Wear campaign (e.g. Hirvonen 2018; Yle 2018a & 2018b).

The differences between the NGOs on what to avoid and what to pursue in campaign communication, can largely be explained by the backgrounds of the people behind the campaign strategies. The Plan interviewees were communications professionals who had executed the campaign with an advertising agency, and ethical questions (beyond following and interpreting guidelines) did not seem a concern deeply reflected upon in the communications team. Solidarity interviewees behind their campaign, on the other hand, were development professionals who openly struggled with living up to their responsibility ideals in the competitive markets. Most of Women’s Bank interviewees were not development professionals – which interestingly, was perceived an asset for Women’s Bank’s brand – but many had backgrounds in business and some in media and communications. People from the private sector resettling into development cooperation primarily because of ‘dedication to help,’ could be seen as another demonstration of the phenomenon of commercialisation and emotionalisation of development. The fact that Women’s Bank interviewees did not trace power imbalances in their work but on the contrary, many perceived Women’s Bank as breaking a stereotypical narrative with a more respectful way of representation, echoes a rather superficial understanding of the questions of power, and of the discussions on representation in development. As professional understanding of the development apparatus seemed secondary to altruistic motivations, Women’s Bank’s ways of doing development communication were in many ways what for example Solidarity strived to avoid: simplistic, certain, and rather populistic.

The concept of empowerment was brought up in all cases, as the women and girls in the campaigns – or generally in the NGOs’ work – were told to be ‘given a voice’ and to
participate in the work. However, as discussed in chapter 2, the concepts of ‘empowerment’ and ‘giving a voice’ are problematic in this context. If a woman’s opinion or story is presented in the campaign communication as a direct quote, with her full name and her own picture, is she given a voice? The spectator knows what listening to this ‘previously silenced voice’ should reveal, and the NGO provides exactly that. (Wood 2001.) In all three cases, the faces of the campaigns were selected by local partner organisations, based on criteria given by the Finnish NGOs. The girls or women (or men, as in Solidarity’s case there were also men represented) were selected based on their stories, as they needed to be fully supportive of the narrative that the NGO strives for in the campaign; and based on other criteria to make sure the NGO provides a versatile sample of stories to share. The women and girls end up giving voices to the predetermined narrative, as the NGO has all the power to select who and what is worth representing, leaving the power structures unchallenged. As Kapoor (2004) notes, representing the subaltern’s voice ‘as it is’ in development communication is an illusion that only masquerades the fact that NGOs “filter, reinterpret, appropriate, hijack” (637) her voice in ways that suit their own purposes. In addition, ‘having consent’ of using one’s face, name and story is tricky, as the NGO’s influence and power in the grassroots project level can be even intimidating for an individual (ibid.). Plan’s use of this power in the Maternity Wear campaign was quite extreme for a children’s rights organisation. As Tuomas Kurttila, the ombudsman for children in Finland noted in a podcast interview (Yle 2018b) in which the Maternity Wear campaign was discussed: the best interest of a child is not necessarily what the child consents to, but rather, the organisation should have first-hand responsibility of evaluating how to best secure the child’s rights.

The main advocative functions of NGO communication are the moral education of the West (Chouliaraki 2013, 204), and to raise awareness of the complex structures and realities of international development (Johansson 2017, 10–11). As Johansson writes, these advocative functions of NGOs tend to have tension with another important function, which is maximising donations (ibid.). Although this tension can be traced in the site of production in the case of Solidarity, the aspect of educative awareness raising gets lost in the shock-and-sex-appeal advertisement of the Uncut campaign. Using Cohen’s (2001, 214–217) division of emotional appeals in human rights communication into anger, guilt, and empathy, Uncut plays with guilt, as donating is the only way of ‘doing something’ by which the spectator can shrug off her privileged guilt of not being able to empathise
with the cause. The *Maternity Wear* campaign uses the guilt appeal in a similar way, and both campaigns also rely on an unspoken anger towards the patriarchal cultural contexts of the causes. Although *Uncut* provides much more context than the other two campaigns, context is consciously provided only to the extent that Finnish publics can easily understand it (instead of having to try to understand the mutilators’ points of view).

However, the tension between emotional marketing and advocative aims was not as clear in the cases of Women’s Bank and Plan, as in the case of Solidarity. While avoiding anger or guilt in their fundraising appeals, Women’s Bank’s advocative communication reaffirms a stereotypical image of an ‘average Third World Woman’ that legitimises sympathy or empathy: she is essentially oppressed, although capable of overcoming oppression with help; she is racialised (or African), as in the ‘Profession head’ figure; and she is preoccupied with survival and dreaming of a simple solution, a manual profession. Lastly, the explanatory proof of her need for help remains unexplained beyond the descriptive fact that she is a poor ‘Third World Woman.’ (Mohanty 1991b.) Her position in the world is given: although she is united to a global sisterhood by being ‘just like us’ (which grants her our sympathy), her circumstances are ‘nothing like ours’ (which gives her the deservingness of our assistance) (Dogra 2012; Mohanty 1991b). Sympathy towards this imaginary woman is thus created by what Dogra (2012, 122) argues to be a radical balance between representing “individuals [either] delinked from any historical collectivity, or as ‘human’ in the largest possible sense of global collectivity, but nothing in between.” Within Women’s Bank, this imaginary was, however, considered valid and respectful awareness raising, as it represents the women in a positive light, and no tensions between fundraising means and advocative aims were traced in the *WB Walk* site of production.

Plan, on the other hand, seemed to have a rather radical ‘ends justify means’ approach to maximising donations even at the cost of creating a manipulated narrative of development. Although knowledge about child (under 15-year-olds’) pregnancies is limited as reliable studies on them have not been conducted, spectators were given the impression that pregnant 12-year-olds is a common sight in Africa. Additionally, the imaginary provided was racialised as any context was faded out of the picture: although from the campaign’s web page one learns that the girl model is from Zambia, most passers-by would have to rely on their racial prejudices to interpret which part of the
world she is from. Vast work against under 18-year-olds’ pregnancies in three continents is thus represented by a pregnant pre-teen African girl. This only bolsters sexual and racial stereotypes of African men as sexually over-virile and oppressive (Fanon 2008 [1952]; Hiddleston 2009, 65–66; Wilson 2011, 318), and African girls as voiceless and subordinated sexual objects in need of rescue. The only reason for these choices was to maximise donations, with the expense of realistic awareness raising on global development realities. The Finnish public’s overly pessimistic knowledge about the situation in the Global South reflects these dramatic and pessimistic narratives that draw on colonial stereotypes.

6.2 The ironic spectacle of ‘doing something about it’

After the emotional legitimisation of the cause, donation as ‘doing something about it’ is secured by making the individual’s contribution visible and concrete. Oravasaari & Pessi (2011) divided Finnish altruist types into three groups: ‘happy altruists’ had personal value-based motivations for helping, but they also recognised its egoistic social value (‘helping makes one look good in other people’s eyes’). ‘Independently happy altruists’ felt the most internalised obligation for helping, as they felt it was as strong a moral duty as happy altruists did, but they did not recognise egoistic social incentives for helping. ‘Reserved altruists,’ on the other hand, perceived helping important, but did not feel that it was characteristic for them, nor did they have strong moral motives for altruism. (Ibid.)

The study shows that 43% of ‘happy altruists’ were prepared to donate money for fundraising, whereas 34% of ‘independently happy altruists’ and only 14% of ‘reserved altruists’ were prepared to do so (ibid. 78–80). Hence, although independently moral reasons for donating were common, the incentive of social acknowledgement through donating was predominantly present. Plan and Women’s Bank targeted their fundraising communication to the ‘happy altruists’ by emphasising the importance of donors’ social media activity: in addition to donating – which would give enough satisfaction for the ‘independently happy altruists’ – one was offered to do something concrete and visible in the name of ‘awareness raising.’ Participating in events and publishing photos with specific hashtags, ‘selfie-signs’ and NGO banners; or changing one’s social media profile pictures to NGO slogans, copy-pasting their ‘tweets’ and thus, becoming a kind of ambassador for the campaign causes, are ways for the NGO to get free publicity and for
the spectator-donor to get her altruism recognised by her social networks. This win-win situation of recognition is justified by the importance of raising awareness on women’s and girls’ rights in the Global South. However, as discussed before, such social media ‘clicktivism’ on distant issues does little more than strengthens a sense of Western communitarianism, making ‘awareness raising’ less about learning and more about emotional and moral introspection. (Chouliaraki 2006; Madianou 2013.) Solidarity, on the other hand, recognised that ‘concreteness’ in altruism may be more appealing to donors than only giving money, but targeted its fundraising communication to the narrower group of ‘independently happy altruists’ by not emphasising the importance of individual ambassadorial altruism as much (although donors were addressed flatteringly as “change makers,” but they were not urged to clicktivism). Altruism as self-expression within one’s own (social media) networks reflects the post-humanitarian shift from the politics of pity to the politics of irony in development communication, as donors can publicly celebrate their ‘do-gooding’ (Chouliaraki 2013).

As Johansson (2017) notes, the capitalist logic of supply and demand work differently in the markets of altruism, where demand is defined by what donors are willing to support, regardless of what the rights-holders’ demands would be. This results into the ‘product’ (aid) not necessarily correlating with needs, but with what donors feel like supporting. (Ibid. 107.) Development aid has, indeed, been criticised for sometimes failing to address grassroots needs. Although reasons for this are complex and not reducible to fundraising means only, Ramalingam (2013) notes that to some extent, donors’ preconceptions delimit the causes to be addressed in development. One challenging example he gives is the persisting myth of rural poverty being ‘worse’ than urban poverty, which has made organisations fail in addressing urban poverty as rapidly as it is occurring in the Global South. (Ibid. 23.) The market logic requires the cause to be legitimised by the donor, who is easier to mobilise with causes that do not challenge her preconceptions of the ‘deserving poor’ as, for example, rural. At the same time, the donor can legitimise her sympathy towards the ‘deserving poor’ by informing her (social media) networks about the cause, while feeling she has ‘done something concrete about it.’ This way, the post-humanitarian ‘happy altruist’ demands visibility for herself, while keeping distance to the cause by not learning too much about the ‘Other.’ The idea of such small acts as copy-pasting a ‘tweet,’ sharing in social media, or donating a small sum ‘with just a click,’ is a fundraising appeal that Dogra (2013) calls the ‘conversion strategy.’ In this, an
explanation for how such small acts can contribute to change is never provided, and the reasons for such disparity are left “unconnected to past or present global links as it is just the way things are – poor are poor because they are poor.” (Ibid. 88.)

In addition to social media platforms exploited in NGO fundraising, another way of gaining ‘ironic’ visibility that was used to some extent in all three campaigns, was the use of celebrities. As the interviewees stated, Solidarity relied more on celebrities in the Uncut campaign than they had before, to build legitimacy and trust towards the NGO brand. It is an interesting contradiction that although Solidarity is perceived a legitimate professional NGO in the Finnish field of development, this professional legitimacy has not been enough to build trust among the public, but instead, celebrities who have no expertise in development are used for that. Women’s Bank, however, had used celebrities more in the past years when advertising WB Walks, but according to some interviewees, has since decided that their development communication is ‘more genuine’ without a focus on celebrities (some famous faces and names appeared, but they were not focused on in the campaign). The WB Walk cause, however, was presented in much more simplified ways than the Uncut cause, which perhaps reduced Women’s Bank’s need for celebrities as emotional and advocative intermediaries, which Chouliaraki (2013) argues to be the celebrities’ function.

In Uncut, celebrities were not visible in the immediate fundraising communication, whereas Plan’s Maternity Wear campaign was marketed as if its ownership belonged to the two celebrities, Koutaniemi and Suhonen. In addition to a peak in donations for Plan, the celebrities’ brands were propped up by the ambassadorial authority they were given: to speak and act for perhaps the most subaltern group of all, pregnant girls in the Global South. Additionally, they gained free visibility for their art, as they would likely not have had the chance to advertise their brand as visibly and for free in more conventional ways. The contrast between the famous Finnish artists (who are ‘elite’ even from the Finnish perspective) and the pregnant girl Fridah (who is ‘subaltern’ even from the rural Zambian perspective) is an extreme embodiment of global inequality, and further distances the two – even when they seemingly engage with each other and ‘close the circle’ (Chouliaraki 2013). Underlining the distance between the two was quite openly admitted, as Plan’s objective of the campaign was to shock people with contrasts.
6.3 Do ends justify means?

As Mohanty (1991b) argues, ‘Third World Women’s’ oppression – and the necessity of Western feminist interventions – is often articulated with descriptive proofs that lack explanatory potential. All three campaigns examined here provided valid descriptions as proofs of the necessity of their work: FGM is a severe human rights violation but still practiced in some areas; poor women are not financially self-determined in many countries; and child pregnancies are, as well, severe violations of the rights of the child. Furthermore, all provided proofs beyond these claims with statistics and personal stories that highlighted the importance of the NGOs’ work. My intention is not to argue against work that aims to tackle these issues, nor to disprove the causes the NGOs focus on. On the contrary, there is no question that the ends are rightfully justified, as all causes are serious and require dedicated work.

However, the explanations that the descriptive proofs lack, are not so much for why the work is necessary, but for why such representations of the causes are necessary for the work. As mentioned earlier, it was difficult for me to get answers to the latter question in the interviews, as the answers would often be to the former question that was never asked. When inquired why Finnish people’ social media activity is necessary for the abolition of child pregnancies, the answer was to the question of why improving girls’ rights is important in the first place. Similarly, I received many affirmations of the importance of improving poor women’s livelihoods in the Women’s Bank interviews, the importance of which was never questioned. It was at times difficult to get beyond this, as the means were in general not considered very important, if the ends were valid.

Only in Solidarity’s case had they clearly discussed the importance of means, as the campaign imaginaries had been consciously designed to challenge some of the Finnish spectator-donors’ preconceptions. However, the Uncut campaign’s cause was also backed by descriptive proofs only, which considered the existence of the FGM habit enough explanation for the need of donations. Explanations for why FGM is still considered important in the community level, which would, as an interviewee noted, humanise those who choose to get their daughters mutilated, were deliberately left out of the narrative. Plan, on the other hand, proved its work to the audiences with statistics on underage pregnancies, disregarding any explanations about their choices of representation. As Plan
claimed to address a global problem, explanations would have (inconveniently) required the separation of, for example, a 17-year-old American girl who is married and pregnant for religious reasons, and a pregnant 12-year-old Zambian girl who is likely a much less accurate representation of underage pregnancies worldwide, than the former.

However, from a marketing perspective – from which NGOs are increasingly forced to look – providing explanatory narratives is irrelevant. And why should they be provided, if efficient fundraising permits NGOs to maximise the work they do for obviously important causes? This was a question I was consistently challenged with when discussing the topic of this thesis with friends and acquaintances. Furthermore: why is it bad that the Finnish public knowledge of development in the Global South is pessimistic, if that increases willingness to donate? Again, a marketing framework does not provide us with satisfactory arguments to challenge these questions. However, marketing does not provide an adequate framework for discussing human rights issues, nor the terminology for a de-colonial discourse that is prerequisite for global equality.

A better question could be: should private donors with no expertise in development have such an important role in it – and in the end, do they? As the expert interviewee, outside of the three NGOs, pointed out; although private donors are an increasingly important source of funds for individual NGOs, their contribution to change might not be as significant in the global level that the fundraising means could be justified. The assumption that ‘the more NGOs there are and the bigger they get, the better off the world will be’ has, again, only descriptive value that lacks explanatory potential. By looking only at the survival of individual NGOs, a larger development critique is ignored. Should there be intrinsic value to having countless NGOs that focus on helping girls in the Global South? From Escobar (2012) and other development critics’ (see e.g. Escobar & Mignolo 2010) point of view, the development NGO ‘web’ only reinforces the inequality it seeks to abolish. Although most (including myself) would not go as deep in development critique as they do, there is a deficiency in the system that commercialises inequality and relies on means that are not compatible with, nor productive for, the aim of fighting inequality (e.g. Dogra 2012; Hesford & Kozol 2005; Kapoor 2013; Sharp et al. 2010). How much private donations contribute to social change in the global level is a question beyond this thesis (and likely, a question beyond definitive answer, as even the question of whether foreign aid even works is still left unanswered; Riddell 2007). However, the
fact that NGOs’ private fundraising as it is practiced is widely questioned and criticised in the academic field of development, is a call for critical reflexivity instead of assuming every donated euro contributes to a better world.

Conclusion: What can be done?

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove. What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronising, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa. A single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, in any way. No possibility of feelings more complex than pity. No possibility of a connection as human equals. -- So that is how to create a single story: show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

–Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The danger of a single story (2009)

An author who fights against reproducing what she calls a ‘single story,’ Adichie speaks in a TED-talk about how difficult her road has been in publishing novels that are told from a feminist, middle-class Nigerian perspective, as it is against the Western readers’ and publishers’ preconceptions of what an ‘authentic African’ perspective should be. Not despite, but because of the difficulty in telling multiple stories of Africa, she argues, there is an urgent need for producing them.

It is against this single story of women and girls in the Global South that this thesis has attempted to argue. Although there is (to varying degrees) reflexive understanding within NGOs of their responsibility in contesting a victim/saviour –narrative in their communication, the prevailing perception seems to be that by using positive, ‘empowering’ ways of representing women, the hegemonic narrative of Third World Women as suppressed victims would be contested. Or, that by presenting their direct quotes instead of explicitly speaking for them, they could now be heard as equals; or that telling their story from the perspective of an overcomer of suffering, their default position as a victim in need of Western saviour could be justified. However, there is a danger in
this ‘empowering’ way of representation, as it only disguises the power of the representor by denying the represented woman’s or girl’s subordination. Her story remains told within the established narrative that is colonising and patronising, making ‘empowerment’ remain far from de-colonisation.

The denying of subordination can get quite impudent, too, when for example Plan backs their choice with the statement that the 13-year-old girl ‘knew what she consented to’ when she agreed to give her face to the campaign. If individual agency and consent are not seen against the contextual constraints to that agency, then agency is defined in a way that is not productive for empowerment or emancipation. Had Fridah not consented to be photographed, would Plan have given up the already planned campaign and reflect upon it, or would they have searched another (African) girl that would have been willing to give face to the already defined story? Similarly, although not as presumptuously, the other two campaigns, too, claim to give authentic voices to the people they represent, while admitting that only those voices are made audible that support the predetermined narratives. Claims of ‘giving a voice’ only cover the subordination that is intrinsic to the single story of Third World Women within public development discourse. Although there is genuine attempt, the subaltern is left unheard.

However, NGOs could try as hard as they might to give voice to the Third World Woman or girl and represent her as equal, and still fail to do so if the objective is to sell her deservingness of aid. As “the discursive space from which the subaltern can be heard is disabling” (Kapoor 2004, 639), the market-logic fundraising framework does not provide space for other voices than those of the NGOs and the Finnish spectator-donors. When representing people who are historically, politically and discursively in a subordinate position to the representor and the viewer, there is no possibility of representing them ‘as equals’ (Spivak 1988). From this point of view, the debate over the ‘respectful representation’ of women and girls in development fundraising communication, is less important than to question whether marketing provides a just framework for discussing human rights issues altogether. When development issues are communicated to the Finnish publics within a marketing framework, the knowledge that is produced stays within the same colonial parameters it seeks to displace.
This said, NGOs obviously still have first-hand responsibility for the development imaginaries they produce to the Finnish publics. Guidelines on the representation of subjects in the Global South should be comprehensive and less open for interpretation, as for example, the discussion around the *Maternity Wear* campaign demonstrates that concepts such as ‘dignity,’ ‘protection,’ and ‘consent’ might have strikingly different meanings from a de-colonial perspective than from within a discourse of capitalist marketing. Guidelines and codes should consider the colonial baggage that any subaltern representation carries, and at the very least, NGOs should not build on racial stereotypes or repeat a ‘white man’s burden’ narrative. The fact that (most) development NGOs no longer utilise up-to-down angled photos of starving children with flies in their eyes is obviously a good start, but nothing to brag with. Accordingly, creating new terminology that bears less political power connotation is extremely important, but not enough if the content remains. As Kapoor (2004, 629) notes,

- - development organisations or researchers may now call their subjects ‘beneficiaries’, ‘target groups’, ‘partners’ or ‘clients’, instead of ‘poor’, ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘disadvantaged’, but this does not by itself change the discourse or dismantle the us/them power relationship. So caught up are we in this coding that it becomes important in our encounters with the Third World to ask who represents, and what baggage positions us in this us/them manner.

In the same way, NGOs may work ‘through joy’ as Women’s Bank does, and use rhetoric of ‘empowerment’ or ‘participation,’ and directly quote the women in the ‘Third World,’ ‘developing countries,’ or ‘Global South;’ but re-naming the category is not sufficient for de-colonising its meaning. As one interviewee (not development professional) from Women’s Bank stated, much of the publicity for development work gets covered under a “cake frosting” of politically correct terminology, and debates over which terms to use. Although the debates over terminology are necessary and justified, I agree that focusing on using the correct terms that are trending in development, distracts us from questioning larger issues of power. (Although this was not exactly the interviewee’s point, as they argued that instead of using correct terms, things should be “told as they are” – which is not only textbook example of populist rhetoric, but also impossible.) Finding beautiful terms to solve complex issues, such as ‘empowerment,’ requires critical scrutiny over whether they represent real change, or if they only represent the “appropriation of nice sounding words to dress up ‘business as usual’” (Sharp et al. 2010, 1136).
For NGOs to deliver as ethical and de-colonial development communication as their operational frameworks permit, they should first recognise their role and power in knowledge production, and the inequality in repeating the single story of the ‘deserving Third World Woman.’ Additionally, as Spivak (1996a & 1999) suggests being prerequisite for de-colonial thinking, NGOs should not deny their power or claim to represent life ‘as it is experienced,’ but instead make explicit their complicity in shaping the necessarily inadequate narrative. Fighting inequality does not remain only in the Global South where the NGO projects are, but starts from generating just discursive mind-sets for Finns to understand global issues. Thus, it is necessary that also those who design fundraising work in Finland (instead of only those who work in the development projects) have expertise on de-colonial methods, and understanding of global development issues and their historical grounds. When fundraising is planned only from a marketing perspective – however benevolent the intention – the non-governmental sector’s important function in knowledge production gets trampled by its survival and growth. Furthermore, the assumptions of ‘compassion fatigue’ or the audience wanting to hear ‘quick solutions’ – which seem to guide commercialised fundraising – underestimate the audience’s capability to digest narratives more complex than those provided. This creates a loop in which information that is assumed unlikely to create attention gets consistently filtered out, and the audience is not even given a chance to try to understand the contexts. (Cohen 2001, 191–194.)

There is also need for public discussion that could challenge the ‘ends justify means’ argument that is often used to overrule any critique. In Finland, like in many English-speaking Western countries, any attempts of public discussion on coloniality have recently been dismissed by a rhetoric of ‘upsetting:’ those who criticise public practices or discussions for their coloniality, tend to get their criticism downplayed by the hegemonic public for being uptight and ‘upsetting over trifles.’ For example, the indigenous Sami people have struggled in getting heard their criticism of well-meaning public jokes about their culture. Although the colonial implications in the case of Sami people, who continue to be colonised by Finland, could be thought as being clearer than in the case of the southern hemisphere, where Finland never had colonies; the discussions follow the same patterns. When the intention is not harmful – or when it is even the contrary, in collecting money to fight inequality – then any means can be thought of being justified. Commenting on the discussion around the Comic Relief’s Ed Sheeran –featured
video, the Guardian columnist Victoria Mitchell (2017) articulated the more popular opinion than that of this thesis:

Of course, you can pick [NGO videos] stylistically, find the holes, spot the lapses in political correctness, wave a big flag over the bits you think aren’t clever, but isn’t it better to be one of the people raising money than one of the people standing on the sidelines blowing raspberries? The key question about these videos is surely not: ‘Are they poverty porn?’ but: ‘Are they true?’

However, to question whether NGOs ‘tell the truth’ only indicates that the criticism is not heard. The narrative of women’s and girls’ rights violations in the Global South is not untrue, and there is no arguing that the facts provided within the NGO campaigns would legitimise the necessity of work against FGM, child pregnancies, or women’s economic dependency. However, the narrative is incomplete for knowledge production, and not productive for its own aim, eradicating global inequality. As this thesis has argued, it is at least as important to address the coloniality in discourse, as it is to support work against inequality in distant places, for without discursive equality the goal of global equality is essentially not reachable.

Furthermore, the assumption should not be that ‘poverty porn’ is a necessary evil in NGO fundraising, as there are less colonial means to rise funds and awareness productively. For example, the Radi-Aid awards bring forth not only poorly made, but also inspiring campaign videos that challenge stereotypical understandings of the Global South, such as the campaign video by Ba Futuru/Oaktree called I must not make assumptions, which was nominated for the 2017 ‘Golden Radiator’ award (Radi-Aid 2017b). Additionally, there are plenty of exemplary attempts at popularising the critique of established development fundraising appeals: for example, SAIH not only has initiated the Radi-Aid awards and published songs like Africa for Norway, but also published popular, satirical campaign videos like Who Wants to be a Volunteer? and Let’s save Africa! – Gone wrong. Both videos are starring Michael, a child fundraising actor who is “the first person to call” whenever NGOs from overseas need someone to play the role of the sad African child, and both are good examples of critical, educative campaigning that is also funny and interesting. (SAIH Norway 2013 & 2014.) Critical discussion has also been popularised through other channels, an example of which is a satirical and popular12 Instagram account Barbie Savior (2018), maintained by anonymous individuals, and starring an

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12 In July 26, 2018, it had 156k followers.
American Barbie doll who travels around Africa saving children. As the account biography states, it is about: “Jesus. Adventures. Africa. Two Worlds. One love. - - It’s not about me… but it kind of is.”

In Finland, too, the public sphere has recently taken more ownership of the critical discussion on colonial imaginaries. Following the satirical genre that the examples above have used, ‘Finland’s Whitest Gaze’ anti-award vote was opened in May 2018 in Twitter and Instagram (Valkoisinkatse 2018). Unlike the ‘Rusty Radiator’ anti-award, the Finnish anti-award is not given to an NGO, but to a visual artist with the most obvious colonial ‘white gaze’ in their work. Among other artists (such as the light artist who illuminated the Sami people’s sacred Sana fell with a Finnish flag for Finland’s 100th Independence Day), the photographer Koutaniemi and the designer Suhonen were nominated for the Whitest Gaze anti-award for their participation in Plan’s Maternity Wear campaign. The ‘winner’ has not yet been elected in August 2018, but Koutaniemi and Suhonen have the most votes. Although the organisation has first-hand responsibility for the campaign concept, the celebrity artists, too, have responsibility for their participation. Their blindness for their ‘white gaze’ is, however, perhaps more justified than that of an international children’s rights organisation.
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Appendices

Appendix 1

Campaign activity in Facebook: Uncut – International Solidary Foundation
Solidarisuus
23. elokuuta · ☁

Ensimmäisissä lucilla kisi-yhteisön pienet koululastytöt pärjäävät vielä poikia paremin koulussa ja he leikkivät vapautuneesti poikien kanssa välittömiä.

Jotain kuitenkin tapahtuu sen jälkeen: tytöt muuttuvat aroiksi, lopettavat liikaat ja vilkastettavat seurueen. Tämä saattaa liittyä muihin syihin, kuten puolustus yhddestä juuri puhuttavasta.Tai uusi bunkkeri, joka eivät sovi yhteen tytön koulunkäymän kanssa."

Silpominen: Este tyttöjen koulutukselle - Solidarisuus

Silpominen: Ketä laki suojee? - AntroBlogi

Suomen lainsaarvohyökkäysta on liittymän tyttöjen sukuaistempiä liikutumisen sairaan virkamies


Hän pyysi sairaanhoitajia ja lääkäreitä ympärikkämaan Raelin synnytyksen yhteydessä saadakseen lapsenlapsilleen kunnilaisen äidin.

"Kynsin häneltä, miten alapäin ja iloin liittyvät toisiin. Onko hänellä alapäin vielä tekevän?" Raeli listaa turhautuneena. Hermostuminen anopille kannatti.

"Siitä päivästä pitäen hän on kunnioittanut minua." #silpomaton

Rael haluttiin ympärillekata sala lukeen synnytyksen - Solidarisuus

Rael Kem onion anoppi oli valmis silpomaan miniässä sukueltemuut olla kesken synnytyksen. Kylläkin naiset tekivät yhteydessä silpomien vastausta työ- ja terveys...
Voimaantuneen naisen ei tarvitse olla epätoivoinen - Solidaarisuus

Solidomon on vakavien muttoin. Se ei kuitenkaan ole aineha haaste naisten elämässä. Kotikoulutus on Kerissa ystävät ja vallitsevan fyysiyttynyttä. Maiseen naisen tämä joudtu tarvoksesta...

Kasvitieluja jätet kuoriutui naisten oikeuksien kannattaja - Solidaarisuus

"Olenna suurirakenteen tämän aine, että yhteisö kokee, että se omistaa tämän projektin, emme ma. Heidät ei tunnus, että heillä olisi arviointityöt." SOLIDAIRUUSI

Feissarin työssä oppii puhumaan

Anteeksi, kännettäkö ihmissuhteet? Tiedättekel, missä on naisen pakka? Haluako esitellä kenen silppomisesta?

Avioliiton ulkopuolinen suhde sai isän säästämään tyttärensä silppomiselta

Simeon Gentampe Ondrei ymmärsi avioliiton ulkopuolisuissa suhteessa, että hänen avioliittoansa oli hajaamaa silppomisen takia.


Lue kevällä julkaisu Simeonin tarina. Muutokseen tarvitaan rohkeutta.

#silpponomaton
"Vatkaan toivon ja pääse sätilä kähti!"

Tyttöjen sukuelinten silpoimisen vastainen työh on hidasta ja sen tehtävät voivat jouduta kohtaamaan karvaita pettymyyksiä, kun ihmiset pyrkivät puhuessaan ja silpoivat lapuaaisistaan huoliin maatta työttäen.

Grace kirjoitti tämän blogin kohtaamistaan haasteista, kun silpoimen vastaista työttä Kislaisia on tehty nejäkkään aikana. Teksti on edelleen ajankohtainen, vaikka työtä on tehty vielä vuoden ajan. Pikäntä perintöön muuttaminen voisi pitää pikäntätehtävän ja lannistumattomuutta. Toivoa et saa päästä hiti.

#silpomaton

Neljän vuoden taistelu - Solidaarisuus

Miehen täytyy puukoska myös tyttöjen sukuelinten silpoimisen ympäriltä. Miehet täytyy sisottua ja pysäyä liikaa liialta. Toivottavasti saa voimaa juokaa liikaa työtä, kirjoittaa Grace tuhonneen blogissaen.

SOLIDARISUUS

"Todellisuus on harvoin sitä, mitä lapset kaipaavat"

Myös Kanian valloilla on otettu merkittäviä askeleita silpoimen lopettamiseksi, mutta Olenmaa huomaattaa, etteivät ne riitä.

SOLIDARISUUS

Äidin kivulais valinta

Katsoen toisia päällyÖ National Geographic: karavalla dokumenttia etenemisestä. Eräänlainen ertyyppinen koiranliika. Toinen runko siitä, että koiranliika kehittää lasten hoitoa, sopeutumaa ja harjoituksessa johtavaksiaste...
Tampereella esseistäjää työskentelevä Ville Jaaksi kohtaa työssään toisinaan tyylitkö kohteliaa. Aamulehdien haestattelussa hän kertoo, että esseissä on hänelle keino toimia hänelle tärkeiden arvojen mukaisesti ja paremmasta maailman puolesta. Hän ei anna liikeiden kommentien nujertaa, vaan keskittyy hyvin keskustoihin ja kohtaamisiin ihmisten kanssa.

#Silpomaton #naisenpaikka

Jos Itä-Euroopassa 21-vuotias Vilja tietää, mitä on tulla jatkuvaltaa, mihin tulee kuullut tai kuinka virii kuituukaa - sillä hän jatkaa sitkeästi - Aamulehti

SOLDAARISOUS


Lue Atanchan ajatukset siitä, miten silpominen saadaan ioppuamaan.

#naisenpaikka #silpomaton

SOLDAARISOUS

KENISSA lasten kodeneen avustaja on niin yleistä, yhden maahenossa. "Joskus oppilaat pitävät opettajaa, koska tämä on sama opettaja, joka jää matematiikan tunnilla." Itsekin perhevikkivaltaa nähtävän Azenath Okemwa tietää, kuinka voimaton lapsi on väkivallan alla.

#silpomaton #naisenpaikka

SOLDAARISOUS

Urho Kasan ministrin teettämän tuoreen tutkimuksen mukaan 85 prosenttia suomalaisista pitää kehitysneuvostoa melko tai erittäin tärkeänä. Suomalaiset haluavat suunnata tukea erityisesti tyttöjen ja naisen auttamiseen ja koulutukseen.

#naisenpaikka #silpomaton

Todellisuus on harvoin sitä, mitä lapset kaieta

Myös Karian vallio on ollut markkinoida askelien silpomisen lopettamiseksi, mutta Okenwa huomauttaa, ettei niitä.

SOLDAARISOUS.FI

Kehitysneuvostojen kannatus lisääntyy Suomessa: yhää useampi nostaisi tuen tasoi

Tutkimuksen mukaan suomalaiset haluavat suunnata tukea erityisesti koulutukseen ja naisen ja tyttöjen auttamiseen. Korkeasti koulututut pitävät...
Appendix 2

Campaign activity in Facebook: *Women’s Bank Walk – Women’s Bank*
Täränä käveljin sateissa säässä, mutta hyvällä asenteella Naisille Ammattejä 😊. Jos et päässyt mukaan, niin voit vielä olla mukana lajoittamassa. Lajoita suoraan tästä linkistä:

www.naistenpankki.fi/kavele-naiselle-ammatti-2017-lahjoita

Vielä ehdit lajoittamaan naiselle paremman tulevaisuuden Kävele Naiselle Ammatti -tapahtuman puutteissa. Tee tekstiviestilahjoitus!

#kaveleenaiselleammatti

Tekstaa sana NAISELLE numeroon 16499 (20€)

KIITOS!

#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti

Olette hylkeiltä! Tässä muutamina muistoja päivästä.

#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti

Heisingsessä saattin nauttia kävelevän lisäksi mm. musiikki- ja tanssiesityksistä sekä muutinäytöksistä! Foiossa seurassa lietenkin ❤️

#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti
Naisten Pankki
10. syyskuuta kello 18:04 - Helsinki

Kiva kun olitte ekaa kertaa mukana Kivijärvi 😁

Naisten Pankki
24. syyskuuta kello 14:50 - Helsinki

Ihanaa Turku 😍.
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti #KNA2017

Naisten Pankki
10. syyskuuta kello 14:45 - Helsinki

Hieno kautta 😋.
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti

Naisten Pankki
10. syyskuuta kello 13:41 - Helsinki

Mahtavaa Alahärmä 😍❤️❤️
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti
Hyvää meno Liiksal!
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti

Lieksa on startannut😊

Tekstaa sana NAISELLE:
Tekstaa sana NAISELLE numeroon 16499 (20€)
KIITOS!
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti

Olette niin upeasti mukan! Mieletön meininki.
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti
Naisten Pankki
10. syyskuuta kello 12:43 · Helsinki · 🇫🇮

Hyvätä näyttää Porvoon!
#KäveleNaiselleAmmatti

Naisten Pankki
10. syyskuuta kello 11:06 · Helsinki · 🇫🇮

Hynää meininkiä ympäri maailmaa! Naisille kävellään tänään Ammatteja 70 paikkakunnalla Suomessa ja maailmalla.
Lue lisää: naistenpankkki.fi/kavele-naiselle-ammatti
Appendix 3

Campaign activity in Facebook: *Maternity Wear for a 12-year-old and Every Girls’ Rights – Plan International Finland*
Lapsen tai nuoren raskaus on suoraan yhteydessä avioliittojen märään, joka taas ei anna työlliselle mahdollisuutta päästä omasta elämästään.


Ryhdy tutkiksemme ja varma, että tätä mailistoa ei tarvita:
https://plan.fi/lapsaidit

"Haluan synnytyksen jälkeen takaisin koulun"-kampanjamme malli Fridah tuli raskaaksi 12-vuotiaana. Hän teki kehitsevälle lasten terveydelle liittyvälle työllisyydessä suojan.

"Halusimme tehdä puhveltevan kampanjan, koska asia on niin tärkeää", pääsihteerimme Ossi Heinänen sanoo.

Plan International Suomi
22. elokuuta

#childmothers #jokatyönoikeudet

Lue lisää

Plan International Suomi
15. elokuuta

Galleria Esplanad.

#childmothers #jokatyönoikeudet

Lue lisää

Plan International Suomi
14. elokuuta

12-vuotiaan äitiysvaatteet by Paola Suohon

Lue lisää
Plan International Suomi
12. elokuuta •

Ohessa esimakua Paola Suhonen ohjaamasta videosta, jonka julkaisemme maanantaina. Pysy kuulolla! #childmothers #jokatyönoikeudet

591 näyttökertaa

Plan International Suomi
25. elokuuta •


Jos lapsenlapseni lapsi syntyi huomenna
Oletko koskaan ihan näin työpaikan palveleassa?
SITAMATOISTAJA.COM

Plan International Suomi
11. elokuuta •

Kampanjan ydinajatus on: mallisto, jota ei pitäisi olla pienessä. Kehitysmailossa raskaus ja synnytys ovat iso terveysriski, ja kun nuoret tytöt alkaavat odottaa lasta, myös tulevaisuuden paremmat näkymät surfuva. He eivät voi enää käydä koulussa eräitä todennäköisesti pysty liittamaan lapsiaan ja koulun.

"Raskaus on työville myös iso hänemäntyksen ja pelon aihe", Meri Koutaniemi sanoi.

Lue MeNaiset -lehten juuri aikaanestä kampanjastamme. #childmothers #jokatyönoikeudet

Plan International Suomi
30. elokuuta •

Yhden lapsuuden aikaa on toisen loppu. Paola Suhonen suunnitellut vaatemalliin, jota maailman ei pitäisi tarvita. #childmothers #jokatyönoikeudet

Paola Suhonen suunnitellut äitiysvaatemarkkino 12-vuotiaalle
12-vuotiaan äitiysvaateteet on vaatemallisto, jota maailman ei pitäisi tarvita. Paola Suhonen 130-seittonille työläille suunnittelema äitiysvaatemarkkino tuo esittä, ...
Plan International Suomi

Kesähaaste!
Onko kesäherkkäsi litra mansikoita? Iso jätelö? Street food -annos festareilla? Lahjota kesäherkkäsi hintaa vastaavaa summaa tyytijen koolutuksiin ja suojelun hyväksi! Kerro osallistumisestasi postaamalla kuva kesäherkkuistasi Instagramin haastatelleilla #jokatyönoikeudet ja #kesähaaste.

Jaa ja haasta kaverisiin mukaan! 🍍 🍊

Planin kesähaaste

Tee lahjoitus oman kesähaastintosi hintaa vastaavalla summaalla ja haasta kaverisi mukaan.

PLANIKESÄHAASTE
Ei aidasta Facebookin.

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Plan International Suomi


https://plan.fi/kesähaaste

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Plan International Suomi


#jokatyönoikeudet #tyttöjenpuolella