Partnerships, power & privilege:

A critical investigation of development partnerships between UK & Nepal civil society organisations

Project: *"Strengthening civil society: linking policy, practice and theory to improve inter-organisational partnerships in international development"*

By: Rosie WESTERVELD

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Social Sciences – School of Management

Submission Date: February 2021

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, partnerships in international development (ID) have been heralded as a key dimension towards enabling sustainable and equal collaborations with the aim of increasing the efficiency and success of development interventions. Development partnerships (DPs) are expected to facilitate 'good' relations and practices between Northern and Southern civil society organisations (CSOs) working to alleviate the effects of poverty.

While academic and practice-based research focuses mainly on the benefits of DPs for their expected results and benefits in ID, few examine the influence of organisational, institutional or sectoral environments and how these produce power imbalances in DPs between CSOs. Moreover, little empirical evidence contemplates the differentiated impacts of power asymmetries on Southern CSOs, or the strategies developed to resist these.

Using a Critical Participatory Action Research approach, this study investigates power asymmetries within a DP involving a UK charity and a Nepali non-governmental organisation. Working with both CSOs during a year-long immersive fieldwork in 2018-2019, the thesis examines the specificities and opportunities of this particular DP and the ways that power asymmetries are produced, navigated and resisted. Drawing on postcolonial, feminist, critical and Foucauldian theories, the research explores three key issues: the production, mobilisation, circulation and effects of partnerial narratives and conceptualisations; the multidimensional production of power asymmetries in DPs; and finally, how power asymmetries are mitigated by development stakeholders in DPs.

The findings point to the propensity of power asymmetries throughout all DPs relations, communications, practices and inter-individual interactions. The pressures exerted by external development stakeholders, of which Northern CSOs, donors and institutional agencies, curtail the margins of manoeuvre for Southern CSOs. However, this thesis concludes that resistances are produced concomitantly to power asymmetries, allowing Southern CSOs to reclaim agency in DP enactment, and suggests that Northern CSOs have critical roles to play as 'allies' to support their partners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I see, smell, hear, taste, listen and feel
and let the impressions marinate
in curiosity, laughter and contemplation
until they burst out through my fingertips.

Sometimes I'm surprised
– most of the time I am laughing.

Crussen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AR	Action Research
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, People of Colour
BoT	Board of Trustees
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CPAR	Critical Participatory Action Research
DFID	Department for International Development
DP	Development Partnership
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EU	European Union
GRO	Grassroot Organisation
HQ	Headquarter
ID	International Development
IFI	International Financial Institution
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNGO	Northern Non-Governmental Organisation
OTR	Off The Record
PA	Partner Austria
PAR	Participatory Action Research
(P-ID)	Participant from international development organisations
(PO)	Participant from the partner organisations
PN	Partner Nepal
PUK	Partner UK
RQ	Research Question
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDG	Sustainably Development Goals
SDP	Study Development Partnership
SNGO	Southern Non-Governmental Organisation
SWC	Social Welfare Council
TIA	Thematic Interpretive Analysis
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UKRI	United Kingdom Research and Innovation
WG	Working group

LIST OF TABLE AND FIGURES

ABSTRACTS ACCEPTED FOR ACADEMIC EVENTS BASED ON THIS PHD WORK

2018

1. University of Sheffield Department of Sociological Studies Annual Post-Graduate Conference 2018 "Researching Society, New Horizons"
   Title: "*Empowering action-research? the challenges in aligning ethics and engagement in participatory approaches*" (attended)

2. Ninth Sheffield Institute for International Development Post-Graduate Conference "'Development' in an Uncertain World"
   Title: "*Multidimensional action-research: Journeying the enactment of participation through ethics and reflexivity*" (attended)

3. White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership, Civil Society, Democracy and Development Pathway Workshop on Studying Civil Society
   Title: "*Beyond the liberal democratic narratives: how action-research engages with situated civil societies*" (attended)

4. Development Studies Association Business and Development Study Group "Partnerships in Practice: Issues of inequality and power – has anything changed?"
   Title: "*NGO partnerial perspectives: exploring the divergent perspectives of not-for-profit organisations*" (attended)

2019

5. Fifth Annual Qualitative Research Symposium at the University of Bath "Myths, Methods, and Messiness: Insights for Qualitative Research Analysis"
   Title: "*Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey*" (attended)[1]

6. Third Annual Doctoral Conference Sheffield University School of Management
   Title: "*Civil Society Organisations' partnerships in international development*" (attended)

2020

7. Martin Chautari Conference – Title: "*Inter-organisational development partnerships and civil society: problematising the current discourse on the roles of NGOs in Nepal*" (could not attend)

---

[1] This event led to a subsequent publication in the Edited Proceedings of the Conference, entitled Chapter 6, entitled *Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey* (Westerveld, 2019).

DECLARATION

I, Rosie Westerveld,

confirm that the Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own research and my own work.

I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means.

This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

The following publication was developed on the basis of the work carried out for this thesis:

Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey, R. Westerveld (2019), Chapter 6, Edited Volume of the Proceedings of the 5th Annual Qualitative Research Symposium at the University of Bath.

Throughout the thesis, I notify the reader where I draw from this publication.

CHAPTER 1:   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Empirical focus of the thesis

Partnerships between civil-society organisations (CSOs) in international development – and more specifically, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – have been widely studied (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Mercer, 2002; Chahim and Prakash, 2014; Contu and Girei, 2014; Banks, Hulme and Edwards, 2015). Empirical evidence shows that these partnerships experience organisational and systemic challenges and are subjected to external constraints that impact on the relations between the different actors involved.

However, despite this recognition of power asymmetries in development partnerships, little has been done to understand what actions and strategies are developed to address and mitigate them. There have also been limited empirical studies carried out on the interactions, practices and relations between CSOs involved in international development partnerships (DPs), and how these might be a site of power production. Moreover, power has often been approached and conceptualised solely as a dimensional feature, where one partner holds more power than the other, and over the other. 'Power over' as the prevailing analytical prism to examine power asymmetries overlooks the multidimensional and interrelational nature of power, which means that a comprehensive grasp of the complexity and positive facets of power have been missing when examining power issues in DPs.

Working closely alongside and with two CSOs who partook in the design and the development of the research, the project sought to examine the areas (spaces), relations and practices of power production in trans-continental DPs, to better understand the ways in which power differently affects and impacts CSOs, and the responses that emerge (resistances) to address and mitigate these power asymmetries and their effects.

1.2   Theoretical and conceptual background to the research

The project that informs this thesis was carried out using a critical participatory action-research (CPAR) approach; rooted in Heron and Reason's (2008) *extended epistemology*, the CPAR was informed by feminist, decolonial, Southern and critical theories recognising the influence of gender, class, race in the production of global power asymmetries. CPAR caters to in-depth and critical investigations into the multidimensional and multi-layered notions of power, be they systemic, structural, institutional, organisational or individual. As a transdisciplinary approach, CPAR brought together communities from different horizons throughout the project – academia, civil society practitioners, bilateral actors, development activists – to address issues of power imbalance that affect development protagonists.

The central concept of power drew from Foucault's work on power/knowledge which posits power as co-extensive and as a productive feature of all social relations (Foucault, 1980). Bringing together Foucault's framing of power and the critical work of postcolonial and post-development scholars on the shortcomings of development enabled the empirical analyses displayed throughout the forthcoming chapters. Since CPAR seeks to respond to social issues by simultaneously revealing and challenging the perpetration of inequalities, domination, asymmetries, imbalance, injustice, privilege, hierarchies, op-/re-pression, and conflict (Torre *et al.*, 2012), Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis address issues of power asymmetries between development protagonists, whilst Chapter 7 highlights the ways in which these are being addressed by different individuals and organisations.

Throughout this study, I resort to conceptualisations developed by social science scholars working in disciplines such as sociology or development, management and organisational studies. Janoski (1998) considers that civil society is situated in the overlaps and the crossroads of the four spheres that compose society: the state, public, private and welfare spheres. Civil society organisations (CSOs) represent groups and individuals from these spheres. They assume multiple identities, foci and modes of action.

Development is understood here as the improvement of people's lives through the prism of wellbeing, freedom, agency and opportunities (Sen, 1999). It entails providing individuals, communities and nations access to basic services, equal opportunities, freedoms of speech,

decision-making, movement and participation, 'political and civil liberties' (Sen, 1999, p. 4). The term has served to dichotomise the world by objectifying regions, countries, communities and individuals, equating underdevelopment to poverty, thus overlooking the systemic and structural dimensions of poverty and global inequalities. Drawing from postcolonial and post-development theorists, I embrace a critical perspective on development by acknowledging issues relating to oppression, colonialism and imperialism, structural and systemic inequalities, and the weight of global interdependencies in the maintaining of social and economic injustice. I use the term to refer to a field (international development) and a sector (development aid, development work).

The term partnership refers in this thesis to interorganisational collaborations and relations. I use development partnership (DP) to refer to partnerships operating between North-South non-governmental organisations in the field of international development (ID). I will review in Chapter 2 how the concept has been framed and the challenges intrinsic to transnational partnerships in the field of international development. The question of how to name development protagonists involved in development partnerships reflects shifts that have occurred over the past decades in the field of development (see Chapter 2) – the onus is now on using the terminology 'partner' for all development protagonists, and discussing partner/partner collaborations. However, issues with naming are central to the study as terminology conceals power asymmetries between development actors, as well as the political, economic and cultural legacies of colonialism (Baaz, 2005). I purposefully choose the term partner to refer to CSOs engaged in DPs; other protagonists, such as donors, bilateral agencies and consultancy firms, will be generically labelled 'donors' or 'development stakeholders'.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are social actors (from the private sphere); they promote common goals at national and/or international level; are independent; and are formalised and professionalised (Martens, 2002). In comparison with member-based small scale voluntary organisations (such as grassroots organisations), NGOs are seen as 'modern' professional bodies, employing international and/or local staff and receiving foreign funding (Mercer, 2002; Baaz, 2005; Chahim and Prakash, 2014; Green, 2016). NGOs focus on 'influencing public policies in education, health, trade, justice, environmental, and other national policy domains' (Janoski *et al.*, 2005, p. 309). For the purpose of this research, I

define them as *not-for-profit and apolitical organisations that aim to respond to social, environmental, economic or cultural issues that affect vulnerable groups, towards better, safer and more sustainable living conditions for communities and individuals.* International NGOs (INGOs) customarily have central offices situated in Northern settings and national offices in the countries they intervene in, with expats and local staff managing the implementation of activities regionally. In recent years however, a minority of INGOs have decided to implant their central offices, headed by local teams, in Southern contexts.

Throughout the thesis, I discuss the influence of global development frameworks. These encompass the different texts presented as principles, consensuses, goals, agendas, declarations, or statements that have emerged from international meetings involving development stakeholders in the shaping of the development sector's priorities or guidelines (see Appendix 1).

1.3 Research aims and questions

The research set out to explore how transnational inter-organisational partnerships are developed and enacted in the field of international development, through the study of the established and ongoing partnership between a UK-based charity and its partner NGO in Nepal. The focus of the research lies on power relations and practices between development stakeholders located in both contexts, and how these are being addressed and mitigated towards improving development partnerships. This thesis examines the concept of power within the particular setting of the study development partnership (SDP), and between the organisations involved in the partnership and the development stakeholders that they engage with nationally and internationally.

The project design included *in situ* research in the UK and Nepal. The study involved immersive multi-sited organisational research in both Partner UK (PUK) and Partner Nepal (PN), over the second year of the doctoral programme. Staff from both organisations partook in the research as participants and collaborated in the co-production of the research design and the empirical material. They also facilitated research access to networks and other development actors to expand the research beyond the partnership. The

organisations were thus 'sites' and its actors were 'participants' in the research. Both organisations were interested to learn from the research about how relations of power shape their activities and the relations that they were engaging in.

With the collaboration of the partners, I explore throughout this study how external (sectoral) and internal (organisational) constraints bear direct and indirect effects on the organisations that work in international development, as they might curtail, limit, or damage equal, sustainable and respectful development practices and relations, or instead improve, enhance or promote those same practices and relations. The project addresses these through the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of international development?

RQ2: How are power asymmetries produced in the development sector, and how do these influence the modalities, relations and practices of DPs?

RQ3: How do development stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2, *International Development and Development Partnerships*, sets out to situate historically the emergence of development as a concept, as a field and as a sector. By reviewing the different epochs of development, distinctive trends and priorities are revealed that clarify the recent changes that have taken place over the past decades. Examining the contributions of postcolonial and post-development scholars in the field of development brings attention to the contested nature of the notion, and highlights critical perspectives of development as a global project. This review provides an insight into the rise of the concept of partnership as a relevant and suitable mode of collaboration in the field of international development. I discuss how global development frameworks have contributed to shape the

foci and ethical standpoints of partnership. Chapter 2 ends by introducing development and development protagonists in Nepal.

I then move to reviewing the literature on power in Chapter 3. Entitled *Power in Development Partnerships*, Chapter 3 is dedicated to discussing the different dimensional approaches that influential scholars have taken to conceptualise the notion of power in social sciences. Therein, I introduce Foucault's power/knowledge and pluri-dimensional authors such as Gaventa, as well as Barnett and Duvall, which inform the study at hand.

Chapter 4 – *Methodology, Methods and Ethics* – focuses on the research approach and its philosophical underpinnings, of which the extended epistemology and the ontological plurality. Critical participatory action-research (CPAR) encourages the development and use of experimental, participatory and critical methods; these are introduced and discussed extensively, as mixed-methods CPAR remains a rare approach in social sciences. Carrying out CPAR involves crucial ethical considerations that I acknowledge through the original ethical framework developed specifically for this research.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focus on power asymmetries in development partnerships. In Chapter 5, entitled *DP Narratives as the Imaginaries of Symbiosis*, I examine the partnership narratives that circulate and are mobilised at the SDP level, and how these are shaped and shape relations and practices of power between development protagonists. The empirical materials show how narratives are pluri-folded and overlapping, organised around principles of unity, differentiation or contrast. The imaginaries of symbiosis, a heuristic device developed for the purpose of this study, supported me in analysing tensions and conflicts in the relations among the research partners.

Chapter 6 – *Power asymmetries in Development Partnerships* – is organised around a set of four vignettes which display specific interactions between PN, the NGO located in Nepal, and development stakeholders that they engage with. Choosing particular meetings or events allowed me to expose distinct incidents where power relations and practices jeopardised the individuals working for PN and the organisational as a whole. These vignettes and the power issues they illustrated were subsequently developed by using a multi-prism analysis of power in DPs through Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power and postcolonial theories.

Chapter 7 – *Avenues to Mitigate the Effects of Power Asymmetries in DPs* – brings to light the variety of strategies displayed by individuals and organisations working in the development sector in an attempt to address and challenge power asymmetries and to produce more equal, respectful and sustainable DPs. I introduce strategies devised by Northern partners, as well as the resistances developed by Southern partners; I then discuss these through the prisms of Gaventa's Power Cube (2006), Lilja and Vinthagen's (2014) work on resistances and Scott's (1990) notion of hidden transcripts.

Finally, Chapter 8 comprises of the *Conclusion and Final Reflections*, where I lay out (methodological, theoretical and conceptual) learnings from the study, as well as the contributions made by the research to the fields of organisation and management studies, and critical development studies. I close this thesis by outlining avenues for further research.

This thesis makes a number of pivotal contributions to different bodies of knowledge. Firstly, the research has developed new heuristic devices and conceptual frameworks to critically explore development relations and practices (Chapter 5). These contribute to the investigation of power in critical development and organisational studies, insofar that they offer original insights into the use of partnerial narratives and conceptualisations in DPs.

Secondly, the study has expanded the scope of power analysis in postcolonial, critical development and organisational studies, by combining and overlapping different analytical approaches (Chapter 6). This exercise has transcended conventional empirical studies that focus solely on the 'power over' facet and thereby omit to account for other features of power. In doing so, the research provides new insights into power as positive and productive, outlining strategies and resistances produced by development stakeholders to mitigate power asymmetries in DPs (Chapter 6).

Lastly, the thesis contributes to ethnographic and development studies in the framing of the critical participatory action research (Chapter 4) and the reflexive account on key methodological and ethical learnings, opportunities and challenges of embracing such an approach (Chapter 8).

1.5 Introduction to the research partners

This project was developed as a collaborative bid by academics at Sheffield University Management School with a UK-based charity (PUK) and its Nepal-based partner NGO (PN), and was funded through a 3+ White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership UKRI ESRC Collaborative Award. PUK and PN are non-profit, non-political, non-religious and non-governmental organisations that seek to tackle extreme poverty through community-based projects located in Nepal. PUK was founded in 2005 with the aim to fundraise in the UK and Europe, raise awareness of the impact of extreme poverty on local and rural communities in Nepal, and showcase the positive impact of the programmes they support. PN was founded in 2006 towards operationalising the programmes locally in remote areas of the Himalayan mountains, where service provision and delivery is scarce.

Over recent years, the organisations have evolved significantly. They have moved from voluntary to professionalised organisations as they have recruited and structured their teams. PUK now has a team of four staff working to secure donors and funds, and welcomes volunteers and interns. Its board of trustees (BoT) is composed of eight members organised in three working groups (partnerships and organisational development; governance and human resources; fundraising and finance) which provide strategical orientation for the organisation's development. PUK is actively engaged in the national and regional development networks, seeking to play a role in crafting the development agenda with donors and partner organisations. It runs a number of public events, sponsored by visible patrons and ambassadors, in an attempt to enhance popularity, towards gaining the endorsement of private businesses and individuals willing to support the cause. PUK has managed to secure significant funding from major aid stakeholders which has contributed to a change in its functioning and aims over the past years. This will be discussed further in the findings chapters. PN remains PUK's only partner, and PUK's focus is to support PN in achieving its work.

PUK's support to PN is multi-pronged: fundraising and the identification and flagging of funding opportunities; joint funding applications with bilateral agencies; technical skills support, with regards to the accounting systems for instance; the organisation and running of a GP volunteering scheme that supports UK GPs to mentor PN auxiliary nurse midwives

working in remote locations; the training of medical staff; the payment for four PN staff members to travel to the UK yearly to the PUK conference. What's more, PUK has to date consistently provided unrestricted funding which has allowed PN to manage and adapt flexibly to external sectoral practices.

PN has grown in size from six to 200 staff members over the course of 13 years. It receives funding from major aid stakeholders, with a multi-million dollar yearly turn-over. The organisation has developed significant partnerships with other NGOs and INGOs, and it obtains funding from many organisations (over 30 donors). Programmatic focus lies on issues spanning from health to education to livelihoods, with interventions in 22 villages across six districts of Nepal (reaching circa 6,500 people). After the 2015 earthquakes, the organisation also focused on emergency rescue, relief and recovery services and interventions to assist the local communities they work with. It has expanded its areas of work across new regions in Nepal, and has gained global attention after the earthquakes for its privileged access to the most affected areas and its rapid support to remote communities in which the organisation was already embedded. It now has developed programmes related to disaster resilience and preparedness, with tailored trainings delivered in remote communities to prepare against natural and climatic disasters. PN has earned appraisal from external evaluators for the quality of its activities, and is recognised as a crucial development actor in Nepal.

Partner Austria (PA) is another relative of the partnership constellation. The organisation was founded in 2007 to support PN in its project implementation. Although PA works in very much the same way as PUK, it has remained on the periphery of the partnership, possibly given it has secured less funding, remains volunteer-led, and was developed later. My research was designed to be carried out with PUK and PN only. However, over the course of the research, PA secured substantial funding, brought significant changes to its governance and enlarged its scope of work. I had the opportunity to interact with PA on several occasions, and came to realise that it presented interesting collaborative values that could feed into the research. I will discuss this further throughout the findings chapters.

CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to a critical discussion of the key concepts that I will use throughout this thesis: international development, civil society and partnerships. The aim here is to review the historic emergence and construction – and ongoing tensions – that surround these terms, thereby highlighting their contested nature and the problematic assumptions that they find themselves embedded in. This chapter relates to the three RQs by framing key concepts and trends that I will discuss throughout the entirety of the thesis.

I start by discussing international development through a historical perspective, and continue with a review of models and agendas that have shaped the sector. I then introduce critical arguments that have emerged throughout past decades and that have problematised development. These include: postcolonial and post-development theorists, as well as feminist and anti-development authors.

Following, an examination of partnerships in development highlights how they have risen to become considered a suitable collaborative form of relationship between development actors. By questioning the different ways that partnerships have been articulated, I expose the semantic paradigms that shape the concept. I end the section with critical debates around development partnerships.

I finalise this chapter with a closer look at the context of Nepal as site of study, presenting the development actors currently operating in Nepal, and expose contemporary concerns that the country is facing.

2.1 Development as a contested venture

This section is dedicated to a critical review of development, and the controversies that surround its conceptualisation. I start with situating the term *development* historically, showing that it has traversed a number of epochs and paradigms.

2.1.1 Historical discussion of development

'Development' is a culturally rooted 'world-historical term' (McMichael, 2005, p. 594) with a contested emergence. In *The Invention of Development*, Cowen and Shenton (1995) trace the concept back to the 19th century, articulated by the positivist Saint-Simonians who conceptualised development 'not as something that occurred during a period of history [but] as the means whereby the present epoch might be transformed into another superior order through the actions of those who were *entrusted* with the future of society' (Cowen and Shenton, 1995, p. 34, italics in original text). In the 19th century, development was organised around notions of trusteeship, before becoming conflated with underdevelopment and progress, and then choice and liberty. Development is a Eurocentric concept that was born as a counterpoint to corruption and the 'perceived chaos caused by progress' (p. 29) that brought about unemployment and disorder. Cowen and Shenton's (1995) historical study portrays development as simultaneously standing for 'an immanent process and an intentional practice' (p. 28).

Other authors have located development more recently. In her periodisation of development, Hart (2010) attributes the birth of development to the imperial crisis and the liberation movements contesting the colonisation endeavour that marked the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, development funding was focused on 'agriculture, education, health and housing [and] colonial research' (Hart, 2010, p. 121, citing Furnivall 1948, p. 314)[2]. Development was thus the resulting strategisation of

---

[2] The foci of 1940 development funding allocation appears to have remained unchanged in the past 80 years of development.

a colonial project in crisis, aimed at stabilising relations, in response to mounting pressures and tensions in the colonies. For Veltmeyer and Bowles (2018), development is inherently connected to the Bretton Woods formation in 1944, which provided an 'institutional framework of the 'world economic order'' (p. 3).

However, the concept of development is more commonly attributed to Truman, former president of the United States, who discussed development in relation to global poverty in his inaugural speech of 1949 (references to this speech as the foundation of development can be found in the works of Escobar, 2005; McMichael, 2005; Esteva, 2010; Sachs, 2010). The following excerpt of his speech illustrates the extent to which Truman framed development as the counterpoint to misery, poverty, disease:

'More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. […] I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development'.[3]

In Truman's speech, development was articulated as a response to the deep and radical changes brought about by World War II, that had redefined and transformed power relations at a global level, leaving nations destroyed whilst marking a new era for industrialisation and national growth. At the same time, the aim of development was to rectify the legacies and the thriving of communism as 'a false philosophy' that brought around 'deceit and mockery, poverty and tyranny' (as expressed in Truman's speech). Development was an endeavour initially directed towards Europe, and consisted in advancing the state of the depleted nations in order to improve the living conditions of their

---

[3] Truman's full inaugural speech given on 20th January 1949 can be accessed here (link consulted on 04/06/2020).

populations whilst providing a barrier to communism. As such, it was deeply enmeshed in strategic and geopolitical objectives of global control, and led to the formation of a new sector composed of institutions, experts and techniques meant to structure development (Watts, 1995; Escobar, 2005).

The underlying assumption was that the causes of underdevelopment were poverty and misery, and that the responses to poverty and misery were targeted inputs. Truman's focus on scientific advances, industrial progress, and technical knowledge became a framework for the next two decades of development (Veltmeyer and Bowles, 2018). However, over the following years, this definition of development was simplified and reduced to economic growth and income per person (Esteva, 2010).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the US-Europe development relationship expressed in Truman's speech shifted into a global movement organised between high-income countries and low-income countries (often, the low-income countries having previously been colonised countries) (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 2005; Esteva, 2010; Sachs, 2010). This led postcolonial theorist Kothari to state that 'where colonialism left off, development took over' (Kothari, 1988, p.143, cited in Watts, 1995). Liberation movements discredited the seemingly linear pathway to development as argued by Truman, highlighting the systemic and structural issues of oppression, domination and power in the making of the development landscape (Crush, 1995; Pickard, 2010).

The 1970s marked a turn towards a mainstream neoliberal agenda, economic crisis and political revision (Peet and Hartwick, 2009) which defined a new way of conceptualising development. Attention was drawn to social issues such as basic human needs, as well as the consequences of deprivation and poverty. The combination of the economic focus of the previous decades with the social turn resulted in the aspiration for 'growth with equity' (Collier, 2007; Veltmeyer and Bowles, 2018, p. 176). New conceptual frameworks emerged, such as dependency, centre/periphery, bottom-up interventions; simultaneously, development policies and projects aspired for participatory, people-centred and social foci through participatory action-research (PAR, discussed in Chapter 4), and local and contextually-relevant development interventions (Veltmeyer and Bowles, 2018).

The 'neoliberal world order' (Veltmeyer and Bowles, 2018, p. 5) of the 1980s and 1990s inspired the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) pushed by the Bretton Woods

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The spotlight shined on market-friendly state intervention, good governance (Peet and Hartwick, 2009), sustainable development and civil society (Hart, 2001). This 'new developmentalism' (Watts, 1995, p. 58) strongly echoed the debt and austerity experienced in the developed countries, and called for economic and financial control and institutionalisation. The 1989 Washington Consensus redesigned roles for the Bretton Woods institutions, gearing them to become new financial providers for underdeveloped countries, whilst simultaneously enforcing development as an economically normative and global enterprise (Hart, 2001).

Vehement critiques of the SAPs outlined how these became 'forms of disciplining by policy discoursers emanating from the international financial institutions, [with] at any one time the economies of 120 nation-states and the livelihoods of 2.5 billion people […] under their direct supervision' (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, pp. 185–186). The 1990s sought to reclaim the social facet of development, with a renewed interest in civil society, human rights and non-governmental organisations (Watts, 1995). Local organisations and movements, and the preponderant role and place of 'civil society' were thought to counter the centralisation of the new developmentalism, allowing for a return to a more people-centred, locally and contextually relevant form of development, as practiced in the 1970s. This led to a significant increase in NGOs globally, as they acquired a new status in amongst international development actors; they became key contenders in the neoliberal turn that saw the hand over from the state to the third and private sectors (Dagnino, 2010).

Other criticism emerged from Southern countries who contested the neoliberal turn and its effects on nations. The 1955 Bandung Conference was the first meeting that brought together what were referred to as non-aligned countries which sought to instigate alternative development agendas whilst opposing the perpetuation of colonial systems (Kapoor, 2008). Challenging the dominant agendas of development outlined in the previous paragraphs, actors meeting at Bandung, followed by other thematic and/or regional events (see the discussion on the Istanbul Principles and the Siem Reap consensus in section 2.3.3), strived to get values such as solidarity, horizontality, non-intervention, regional and voluntary cooperation included in global development frameworks (Gulrajani and Swiss, 2018).

The following decade brought around a new approach to development. The UN's now famous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) structured the foci of development over the 2000-2015 and the 2015-2030 periods respectively. The MDGs were designed as a means to bridge the various international events that had taken place over the course of the 1990s, which had attempted to strategise and systematise development (Peet and Hartwick, 2009). Via the workings of a global partnership of developed countries supporting developing countries, organised around specific goals and indicators to monitor progress, the MDGs sought to harmonise the workings of development actors towards achieving higher impact and social change. Together with 'debt relief' and 'reducing extreme poverty', the MDGs represent 'a more vividly termed approach from a reshuffled institutional framework' (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p. 94). The MDGs are in reality, however, rather limited, being 'just a wish list of goals based on fine ideals but lacking means of realization' (p. 95), left at the discretion of governments, with limited funding available from international institutions, and omitting to reflect certain contextual or systemic constraints and challenges.

The SDGs picked up from the MDGs and were geared towards 'leaving no one behind' as a result of the MDGs' evaluations showing discrepancies between global goals and systematically excluded groups. In an attempt to rectify the criticisms articulated towards the MDGs, civil society actors were included in the design of the SDGs[4]. These global goals have created a container to funnel development, notably around key interventions dealing with education, health, gender equality and environmental sustainability. These foci have been at the core of the development agenda since the 1940s (Cowen and Shenton, 1995).

Simultaneously to the MDGs and the SDGs which focused on human basic needs and rights, and which mobilised the development community around unenforceable goals, major meetings were organised on aid efficiency, known as the High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness. The 2003 Rome Declaration, the 2005 Paris Declaration, the 2008 Accra Agenda and the 2011 Busan Partnership defined new trends for development stakeholder

---

[4] The complete list of SDGs can be accessed here: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300 (accessed on 30/06/2020).

relations and the foci of development interventions. I discuss these forums in section 2.3.3, notably how aid efficiency has influenced the design of development partnerships.

More recently, Mawdsley (2018) contends that a turning point has been reached through the 'southernisation of development'. She identifies three main concerns that prompt her argument: (1) the narratives of development favour a win-win rhetoric, making the case for an ethical development that pursues national-, market- and development-interests simultaneously; (2) a full cycle back to 'economic growth' (rather than the previous focus on 'poverty reduction'); (3) the ongoing 'explicit and deepening blurring and blending of development finances and agendas with trade and investment' (Mawdsley, 2018, p. 175). All three cases go in the sense of an increased management- and market-based enactment of development. These subsequent frameworks, consensus, trends and goals have helped to harmonise the types of interventions, techniques, activities, projects, outcomes and expected performances of development (Crush, 1995; Watts, 1995; Escobar, 2005).

In the following section, I present critical theories on development to better understand these development epochs. In particular, I introduce postcolonial and post-developmental theories and explain how these have focused on specific issues of development.

2.1.2   Critical discussions on development

Throughout this section, I review a number of theoretical debates and critical stances articulated against development, and the resonance these have with contemporary developmental issues. Throughout this selection and moving forward in the thesis, I use the Foucauldian term for which I apply the current definition:

'A discourse can be conceptualised as a partial closure of meaning, a reduction and exclusion of other possible meanings. In the development aid context, the workings of the discourse of African otherness means that events in other contexts are attributed to, for example, individual, organizational or regional differences and read in terms of 'African difference''.

(Baaz, 2005, p. 101).

2.1.2.1 Postcolonial critiques of development

Development is met with a wide range of critiques, which are deeply rooted in anti-colonial, decolonial and anti-imperialist movements and theories. Postcolonial scholars provided a new set of critical lenses to approach the developmental endeavour. Fanon's (1961) work on decolonisation, *The Wretched of the Earth,* contributed a contemporary analysis of the social, cultural and political oppressions experienced by the colonised, and the dehumanising process of colonisation. Fanon describes how development was only ever possible 'for it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world' (Fanon, 1961, p. 96). The colonial project is, according to Fanon, perpetuated via capitalism and development which continue to dominate underdeveloped regions to draw wealth, goods and labour for the benefit of the oppressor. He argues that violence is as much a means as a part of the liberation process, and essential for the colonised (Fanon, 1961).

Fanon's dichotomised oppressor/oppressed conceptualisation is representative of much of the postcolonial binary theorisation. Said (1979), for example, developed the concept of orientalism, which describes the dichotomised perception of the Orient in contrast with the Occident. Orientalism can be understood 'as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (p. 3). This 'style of thought' (p. 2) is simultaneously ontological and epistemological, and has been reinforced by discourses 'with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles' (p. 2). Development draws from Orientalism in the essentialisation of poverty, misery and political instability, as well as the articulation of discourses to restructure the underdeveloped world.

Similarly concerned with epistemic domination and authority, Spivak's (1983) theorisation of the subaltern focuses on epistemic violence in the process of othering. She is concerned with the representation of the subaltern subject. She explores issues relating to voice, subjectivity, and representation, thereby shedding light on the patriarchal legacies of imperialism and colonialism. Bringing issues of power and intersectionality to light in her famous essay *Can the subaltern speak?* (1983), she argues that Western domination generates systematic epistemic oppression and leads to the persistence of colonial ways of knowing. This domination, summed up in the famous 'White men saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak, 1983, p. 296) reflects the assumption that the poorest communities and groups require *protection from themselves* that can only be provided by the West.

The epistemic and discursive nature of domination was also at the core of Mohanty's work when she focuses on processes of categorisation and gender stereotypes in colonial imaginaries. Categorisation enabled 'the privileging of a particular group as the norm or referent' (Mohanty, 1984, p. 337). Other postcolonial authors focused on social institutions as perpetuating the colonial endeavour; for example, Illich voiced a caustic critique of the Church and its missionaries as colonial agents, and considered schools (education) as enacting a 'radical monopoly over learning and training' (see Hartch's biography of Illich, 2015, p. 170).

Empirical studies have drawn from key notions defined by postcolonial authors. For instance, the problematic practices of othering were analysed in Kenny's (2008) study of the relations between a UK NGO and its Southern counterparts. Therein, she draws from a Foucauldian power/knowledge and discourse analysis (see section 3.2) to critically examine the organisational discourses that circulate within the UK NGO and shape its role towards its partners and highlight the structural silencing and stereotyping at play in development. She discusses how the organisational discourses can be examined as colonising discourses, circulating problematic assumptions about the South and the organisation's beneficiaries. Throughout her study, techniques and politics of knowledge are mobilised to achieve 'knowing of the Other'[5] through project methodology such as Participatory Rural Appraisal,

---

[5] For postcolonial authors, the Other constitutes a socially constructed identity attributed to any individual that does not correspond to the imagined 'Self'. The Other/Self binary is built on colonial discourses which polarise

'cultural sensitivity' and exposure through the field or close connections with the Other. She explores the processes of othering that permeate the relational dynamics, and the ways in which the UK NGO articulates its role towards its partners. Kenny argues throughout her analysis, discourses of otherness either covertly or explicitly convey dichotomised beliefs around poverty, need, help and assistance. Such discourses imply that people from the global south – which the organisation aims to assist – are inferior, dependant and passive.

She shows that the discursive nature of othering is founded on two underlying claims. The first claim asserts that the South needs the North to 'get itself sorted economically' (p. 61) (and underlying this claim, there is a prospective economic gain to be achieved in supporting the South which is underpinned by neoliberal assumptions that economic growth linearly leads to development). The second claim deals with the North holding an intrinsic knowing of the needs of the South and that this knowing allows the North to 'save' the South[6]. Her work highlights the extent to which power relations within DPs are simultaneously a theoretical and ethical issue (strongly informed by histories of domination and servitude), a discursive modality (embedded within rhetorics of development) and an interrelational matter (individual and organisational). Her postcolonial critical examination contributes to showing the multifaceted and multisited nature of power relations in development.

These authors refer specifically to colonialism rather than development, but their work has deeply inspired postcolonial perspectives on development. Notably the examination of essentialisation and stereotyping in development discourses and the formation of identities (Baaz, 2005; Kenny, 2008); the ways in which representations of Southern development actors perpetuate identities attributed to the colonised (Oriental/Other); the role of capitalism in the shaping of development discourses; the issues with participatory development; the circulation of discourses on poverty; the construction of governance, participation, human rights as development trends and priorities; and the politics in the production of knowledge (see Kapoor, 2008).

---

the Westerner coloniser from the colonised savage; these discourses rely on othering and otherness to attribute and stereotype features, beliefs and actions considered as intrinsic to the colonised (Said, 1979; Bhabha, 1994; Baaz, 2005).

[6] Gronemeyer (2010) provides an interesting analysis of the conceptual and philosophical underpinnings of the notion of 'helping' that underpin development actions and motivations.

Postcolonial authors have contributed to highlighting key issues and trends of development as I have shown in describing their contributions above. In the next section, I discuss the perspective of post-development theorists. Post-developmental theories emerged from a group of scholars influenced by post-structuralism, postcolonialism and Foucault's power/knowledge analysis (see Chapter 3). I focus here on development discourses, development as a set of techniques, and the arguments made against the development model.

2.1.2.2   Post-developmental theories

A common thread among post-development scholars is the exploration of development as a set of discourses which organise the meaning, practices and interventions of development. Post-developmentalism calls for redefining and challenging the perpetuation of power relations; for the exploration of the multiplicity of systems of violence; the strategisation of discourses of otherness, difference or oppression that permeate the field of development; and for revealing who benefits from the domination and inequality induced by the development system (Latouche, 1991; Rahnema, 1991; Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Dorlin, 2009; Sachs, 2010).

As shown in previous sections, development emerged as a remedy to underdevelopment. This is discussed in Esteva (2010), for example, who argues that Truman's speech *created*[7] underdevelopment as a 'undignified condition' that required escaping (p. 2). By *inventing* underdevelopment, development has become the only possible aspiration for underdeveloped individuals and nations. The paradoxical relation between development and underdevelopment also fixed a linear and finite pathway towards social change, articulated through material belonging, economic growth, and democratic principles of national governance. The idea that development constitutes 'the only possible way forward' can be appreciated in the following quote:

---

[7] I intentionally italicise *creating*, *inventing* and *imposed* to signify the idea that development is a social, political, historical and cultural construct that is not simply the result of successive historical events as could be understood from the previous section (as argued by Escobar, 2005, among many other critical scholars).

'For two-thirds of the people on earth, this positive meaning of the word 'development' – profoundly rooted after two centuries of its social construction – is a reminder of what they are not. It is a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition. To escape from it, they need to be enslaved to others' experiences and dreams'.

(Esteva, 2010, p. 6)

What constitutes underdevelopment is tied up in growth projection and assumptions about social, political and financial organisation, as well as material property *imposed* by the West. The role of the West in determining the adequate and highly professionalised responses to issues of poverty has methodically overlooked systemic and structural factors of global power, as well as issues of domination, imbalance and oppression. It has also contributed to racialised and territorialised stereotypes surrounding poverty, governance, health, economic growth, political organisation etc. By establishing development as the only possible means for escaping poverty and misery (as framed by Truman), development's postulates appear implacable (these consist of 'the omnipotence of technique, the asymptomatic assumption relating to science, the rationality of economic mechanisms, and the presumption of social engineering as a prerequisite for growth', discussed by Watts, 1995, p. 50).

One of the aims of post-developmentalism is to untangle the implacability of these postulates, and examine development as a *model* which symbolises the perpetuation of inequalities and relations of oppression at a global level. Power is institutionalised through specific rhetorics promoting globalisation, capitalism, growth, progress and modernity (Escobar, 2005; Sachs, 2010). The core argument of post-developmentalism carries on *the model as defunct*. Rather than attempting to fix development through development alternatives, it should be an alternative to development that is sought, a new model that has critically acknowledged and addressed the development shortcomings (Escobar, 2005).

Escobar is considered a foundational scholar of post-developmentalism. A Foucauldian theorist, he investigates the production and circulation of development discourses, and how these have shaped the model as a whole. He focuses on discourses around poverty, marginalisation and progress alongside specific practices 'that are often invisible, precisely

because they are seen as rational' (Escobar, 2005, p. 105). These discourses socially construct groups and developmental issues as requiring external assistance (one can identify the inspiration from Spivak and Mohanty): through the discursive formation, facts, truths and knowledges are standardised, which in turn feeds into the harmonisation of developmental practices through bureaucracy for example.

Escobar (2005) examines the multi-layered power permeation of development, starting with the *discovery* and *problematisation* of poverty, the *invention* of development, the *promise* of science, the *invention* of the village[8]. These discourses recall the terminologies of colonial expeditions narrating their discoveries into unforgiving territories, meeting the savage natives, conquering the unknown and taming the lands and people (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). For Escobar, these neo-colonial discourses crystallise the power relations between donor agencies (he focuses specifically on the workings of the World Bank) and development recipients (the village, the small farmer, community groups).

In *Deconstructing Development Discourse*, Cornwall and Deborah (2010) argue that development is organised around terminologies such as empowerment, participation, sustainability, governance, which structure trends and interventions. These international development languages reflect the 'cultural mindsets of donor agencies' (Cornwall and Eade, 2010, p. vii) based in the Global North; via these concepts and languages, scholars from the Global South are silenced or instrumentalised, and contextual issues are rendered invisible. According to the authors, the development glossary is composed of inherently 'contested concepts'[9] (Cornwall and Deborah, 2010, p. 2, citing the works of Gallie, 1956). These semantics contribute to instilling a normative, exclusionary and neo-colonial approach to development, thus creating problematic assumptions calling for linear and simplistic remedies (via planning and programming). For example, corruption has been conflated with fragile states and failed democracy, and calls for good governance; equality is concerned with issues of gender inequality, which can be addressed via gender-sensitive

---

[8] This can be further expanded with the invention and structuration of space and social groups as normative identifiers, such as of the local, the rural, the marginalised, the vulnerable, women, etc, as critically discussed in Mohanty (1984), Spivak (1983), Hart (2001), and Sachs (2010) to name a few.

[9] I discuss in the following chapter how power is similarly a contested concept, theorised and defined across often contradicting prisms. Throughout this thesis, I am dealing with a number of contested concepts: I draw from critical scholars in the exercise of their definition, to better represent how they are framed for the purpose of this research.

interventions; while capacity building is inherently the imparting of targeted technical skills, passed down from experts of the Global North to uneducated local partners (Rahnema, 1991, 1992; Crush, 1995; Escobar, 2005; Dar and Cooke, 2008; Sachs, 2010).

According to post-developmentalists (see *The Development Dictionary* edited by Sachs, 2010, for an exhaustive overview of post-developmental scholars), development has turned into a technocratic endeavour which involves programming and planning. Planning 'embodies the belief that social change can be engineered and directed, produced at will' (Escobar, 2005, p. 145) through technocratic endeavours and situated expertise. Programming focuses on specific development issues (to the detriment of other issues) and leads to the implementation of 'practices regarded as rational or objective, but which are in fact highly ideological and political' (p. 154). Such practices render the exercises of power invisible through a mechanical and clinical approach to social issues.

Planning and programming have led to the professionalisation and institutionalisation of development 'through a set of techniques, strategies, and disciplinary practices that organize the generation, validation, and diffusion of development knowledge' (Escobar, 2005, p. 45). Development knowledges establish scientific and clinical assumptions about and claims around the nature of poverty, the requirement for scientific intervention, the needs of the poor, but also about who the poor are, what they do, how to save them. The construct of truths justifies development as a progressive and beneficial model by instilling notions of righteousness and morality. These truths (knowledge and discourse) have also contributed to homogenise and crystallise specific systems, practices or values as the *legitimate* ones (Sachs, 2010).

Post-developmentalists argue development cannot be conceptualised as 'a singular phenomenon' (Fujikura, 2003, p. 13). Therefore, development should not be considered a harmonised or structured project applied uniformly across contexts and settings (Fujikura, 2013). Instead, Hart (2001, 2010) considers development as a double phenomenon, a composite of 'Big D' and 'little d' development. Big D symbolises the 'project of intervention' (Hart, 2001, p. 650) characterised by the shift from a US-Europe strategic dynamic to a global endeavour, strongly influenced by the decolonisation process and the Cold War; and 'little d' is the 'development of capitalism as geographically uneven but spatially interconnected processes of creation and destruction, dialectically interconnected with discourses and

41

practices of Development' (Hart, 2010, p. 119). With the latter, Hart (2010) insists on development as coextensive of 'the workings of global capitalism that require and call forth ongoing intervention' (p. 119). The interconnectedness of development ('little d') with capitalism is inspired by the works of Polyani and Gramsci – their works characterised by a critical take on imperialism, civil society and capitalism strongly infusing Hart's (2001, 2010) outlook on the dual nature of development.

Empirical studies have sought to address the discursive nature and technocratic endeavours of the development model. For instance, scholars have focused on the global managerialism resulting from the professionalisation and institutionalisation of development (discussed at length in Dar and Cooke, 2008; see also Crush, 1995; Escobar; 2005; Sachs, 2010) which contributes to justifying the need for development. In Dar and Cooke (2008), the system is shown to be dysfunctional and *simultaneously* self-perpetuating through this dysfunctionality. Thus, development managerialism has a major role to play in managing its own survival, and thereby requires to closely manage the development discourse. Capitalism and neoliberalism play a central role in the management turn in development, as argued by Dar and Cooke (2008).

Postcolonial and post-developmental theories have been critiqued for perpetuating a dichotomised view of the world (exactly what they stand against): postcolonialism as it suggests a rhetorical discontinuity in the colonial endeavour (Watts, 1995); post-developmentalism for its homogenising of development, its claim that development can only be conceived as a modernistic project, and its 'uncritical, romantic celebration of the local' (thus possibly essentialist)[10] (see Kiely, 1999). The (re)emergence of newly framed alternatives to development has sought to freshen these stifled epistemological arguments as I review below.

---

[10] Escobar's (2005) response to these critics points to epistemological oppositions between realists and post-structuralists, and an erroneous understanding of the mandate of post-developmentalism that did not seek to reflect the empirical and heterogeneous facets of development on the ground. Rather, the power of discourse should be understood as homogenising and self-serving. He points to post-development as political, 'constructing an object of critique for debate and action' (p. xiv).

2.2   Alternatives paradigms: rethinking development

Critical scholars have undertaken the labour of conceptualising alternative paradigms to development which challenge and question the North/South paradox, seeking localised, contextualised and communal relations among individuals.

For instance, Latouche (1991) focuses on alternative futures as a social project. Personal experiences abroad highlighted to what extent the *occidentalisation* of the world[11] through its standardisation project enforced by private companies had resulted in the construct of *peripheries vs centres*, and the failing of the modernity project. Drawing from personal experiences and empirical materials, he attributes this polarisation to consumption and to technocratic planning. The concept of *décroissance*[12] emerged as a social organising project to break down the modernity project so as to live according to alternative precepts, thereby reverting to a 'simpler' mode of living, returning to Nature and a communal way of interacting. Degrowth is the translation of the *décroissance* movement initiated by Serge Latouche, which argues in favour for a local, collaborative and minimal lifestyle that bears as little impact on the world and the environment as possible, and that posits the capitalist and materialist aspirations of neoliberalism as a problematic and destructive model. The global modernity project having delivered its promises only to a few, a more localised and communal way of living bore opportunities and possibilities to re-establish 'real solidarities' (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p. 227). *Décroissance* also holds a strong connotation linked to power as it entails the break-down of the centre vs periphery paradigm, in which power is negotiated through polarisation; instead, he argues in favour of embracing a circular and equal power (if we do not seek consumption through competitive means, there is more space for collaborative relations). Practically, this project has been brought to life by Pierre Rabhi with his communities in France, and his focus on agroecology, local solidarities and eco-habitats.

---

[11] In French: 'l'Occidentalisation du monde' – 'occidentalisation' symbolises a more complex (non-translatable) social and cultural project, situated in the Orient/Occident polarisation of the world (and not the four cardinal directional points as suggested by 'westernisation' which came in more recently). 'Occident' is embedded within historical, social, linguistic and cultural imaginaries that go back centuries.

[12] *Décroissance* literally means 'de-growth', growth standing for capital and economic growth as proposed in the development discourse (Sachs, 2010).

In another fashion, Freire (1992) developed the concept of *Sulear*[13] which explores the impact of the universalised imaginary of the North as superior, an ideal for all to aspire to, the centre of knowledge that the South has to absorb. Freire was strongly influenced by Torres Garcia's (1943) *América Invertida*[14] that depicts an upside-down South America with the legend 'Our North is Your South'; therein, he aimed to criticise the polarised attributes of North and South in global narratives and imaginaries. With *Sulear*, Freire invites to redefine the ways in which the world is apprehended and conceptualised, by critically examining the polarisation of regions at a global level, and recognising the problematic legacies this polarisation has had on peoples from the South. *Sulear* challenges the power held by the North so as to creatively produce localised and contextualised epistemologies, knowledges and paradigms. *Sulear* remains inherently decolonial in its philosophical and practical aspirations.

Illich was as much a postcolonial scholar (see section 2.1.2.1), a passionate advocate for the liberation theology in Latin America (see Hartch's biography, 2015, p. 62) as an anti-developmentalist. He believed that confrontation against the Church was a necessary means to tackle the international system which promoted development as the only means forward. This anti-charity and anti-missionary project aimed to counter the perpetuation of the colonial endeavour by the Church, and notably the 'U.S. charity project whose good intentions could not mask its great potential for destruction' (p. 78). His aspiration for a new pastoral approach was based on radical and critical education of aspiring missionaries through self- and contextual knowledge. Teaching confrontational tactics in Cuernavaca, Mexico, he sought to train participants 'to have a deep sense of humility, who will seek to make their faith relevant to the society in which they will be working' (p. 44), thereby *demissionarising* the missionary endeavour (p. 42). He drew strongly from Freire's (2005a) thoughts on liberation and oppression.

---

[13] *Sulear* is a verb that would be best translated in English as 'to southernise' [sulear-se = to southernise oneself]. Freire draws from the physicist Marcio D'Olme Campos who coined the concept in 1991 and applied it the fields of history and geography, using 'sulear' and 'nortear' as concepts of spatial organising. In Freire's argument (1992), 'sulear-se' stands for an invitation to revert one's paradigms and to both physically and philosophically turn one's back on the North and the intrinsic symbols of domination conveyed by the North, so as to better embrace and develop contextualised and localised knowledge.

[14] *América Invertida* can be found here.

Critical and political education for self- and contextual knowledge are also carried out by Vandana Shiva, a postcolonial and anti-developmental scholar. Whilst working closely with women's groups in India, she exposed the patriarchal and colonial functioning of global development interventions that simultaneously mis-represent local groups, local knowledges, and local solutions to global issues. An ardent advocate for the environment and a founder of ecofeminism, she articulates the prerogative for contextually-relevant ecological projects, whilst highlighting the intersections between health, ecology, agrobusiness and sustainable conservation (Shiva, 1988).

Latouche and Freire's work on developing concepts such as *décroissance* and *sulear* symbolise new ways of thinking, and the reclaiming of contextualised power. Illich and Shiva denounce the neo-colonial structures and institutions which operate to implement national-vested interests of global dominion. In seeking for radical and political alternatives to *development as the only way forward* (see section 2.1), these authors seek to remove their theories from the global development paradigm. In doing so, they embrace a localised/regionalised mode of living underpinned by interrelational ontologies reminiscent of Indigenous epistemologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), Andean cosmovisions (Escobar, 2005; Sachs, 2010), and the pluriverse (Escobar, 2005; Querejazu, 2016), all of which espouse ecological, environmental and spiritual belief systems.

In this section, I introduced the concept of development by exploring its emergence and its legacies. I followed with a discussion of different critical theories on development: firstly, development as plural, showing to what extent it is a diverse and dynamic concept which endorses competing interests and value sets; secondly, the postcolonial works on oppression and representation, followed by post-development arguments stating development is a model that requires dissolving; finally, how critical scholars are rethinking the entire paradigm of development as a global endeavour and seeking for alternative, contextualised responses to local issues, thereby endorsing epistemic justice.

In the following section, I focus on partnership as a situated concept. I review the concept of partnership and its multiple framings and situate it in the ID sector, introducing the concepts and the historical emergence of DPs. I then discuss how global frameworks have influenced their scope in ID.

2.3 Development Partnerships in International Development

2.3.1 Introducing development partnerships

To define a *development partnership* (DP), it is necessary to discuss first what constitutes a *partnership.* A partnership is a 'boundary object' which means that it is expected 'to encompass widely divergent and incompatible understandings, and to facilitate mutual misunderstandings' (Taylor, 2018, p. 1). It holds a variety of meanings ranging from intimacy, to business, to protocol, and describes relational modalities between social entities. They are interchangeably designed as: cooperation, association, collaboration, coalition, alliance, union, networks, relationship[15]. The term partnership is used to describe: multi-sectoral networks (Bäckstrand, 2006); interorganisational innovations (Mandell and Steelman, 2003); dynamic and evolving, 'hav[ing] a life' (Franklin, 2009). I draw from Geddes' (2008) conceptualisation of partnerships as non-centralised modes of relations in which all parties hold an equal status and work together, with specific characteristics that diverge from traditional collaborations (Geddes, 2008, p. 7) .

Development partnerships (DPs) are partnerships operating in the field of international development. They are historically composed of three overarching actors: governments and associated institutions (including multilateral actors), NGOs and CBOs – other actors such as businesses, foundations, corporations and think tanks have more recently integrated the landscape (see sections 2.1 and 2.3.3). They can be enacted through a multitude of partnerial arrangements, such as government-non-profit (Brinkerhoff, 2002a; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2004, 2011), CSO partnerships (O'Brien and Evans, 2017), NGO partnerships. When used in development, the term implies a change in the status of the local communities that are part of the relationship, recognising the 'recipients not as passive parties, […] but as active agencies and communities, helping to define their own problems,

---

[15] Mandell and Steelman (2003) argue that these terms should not be used interchangeably as they refer to various designs and attributes of interorganisational arrangements. Throughout this study, I endeavour to employ *partnerships* or *development partnerships* (DPs) to avoid confusion, recognising that in some instances, this will lead to repetitions. However, I prefer to maintain constancy throughout the thesis rather than mislead the reader.

resources and solutions' (Overton and Storey, 2004, p. 2). The status change allows them to reclaim agency and to operate a significant shift from development objects to subjects.

DPs might take place between 'extrovert' or 'introvert' organisations (United Nations, 2004): an introvert organisation (budget-oriented) will seek to partner with similar organisations through formalised collaborative modalities; an extrovert organisation (goal-oriented) will look for strategic alliances, searching for partners with different capacities.

For the purpose of this study, I have drawn from Brinkerhoff's (2002) definition of partnership: 'a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives (…) [that] encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability, and transparency' (p. 4). To reflect their groundedness in social issues and 'real-life problems', I approach partnerships as a type of interorganisational collaboration that aims to respond to complex societal issues (Rathi, Given and Forcier, 2014), and which can be considered as micro-systems that are porous to their socio-spatial environment. This framing of DPs reflects my epistemological and ethical positionings detailed in Chapter 4, and follows precepts of critical development studies (Veltmeyer and Bowles, 2018) and indigenous ethics (Kara, 2018), which seek to shed light on issues of power. Throughout the course of the research, I have endeavoured to better understand if and how this definition is shared among the stakeholders involved in the partnership. Clear dichotomies emerged according to factors such as spatial settings, 'position' within the partnership, partnerial relations. I develop this empirical analysis in Chapter 5 which examines development partnerships as a situated concept.

I conceptualise the relationship between the two research partners PUK and PN as a DP. DPs are believed to 'enable more efficient use of scarce resources, increase sustainability and improved beneficiary participation in development activities' (Lister, 2000). DPs are expected to uphold specific partnerial elements in their workings and relations (Lister, 2000; Mercer, 2003; Schaaf, 2015), such as: the sharing of common values (mutuality, equality, trust, transparency, accountability, reciprocity and respect) (Schaaf, 2015); the enactment of specific governance practices (horizontal participation and decision-making, democratic governance modalities); and the focus on process vs outcome. These are concerned with

the quality of the relations between the partners; shared values; ethics; partnerial processes; voice; and duration of the partnership, as shown in Figure 1 below.
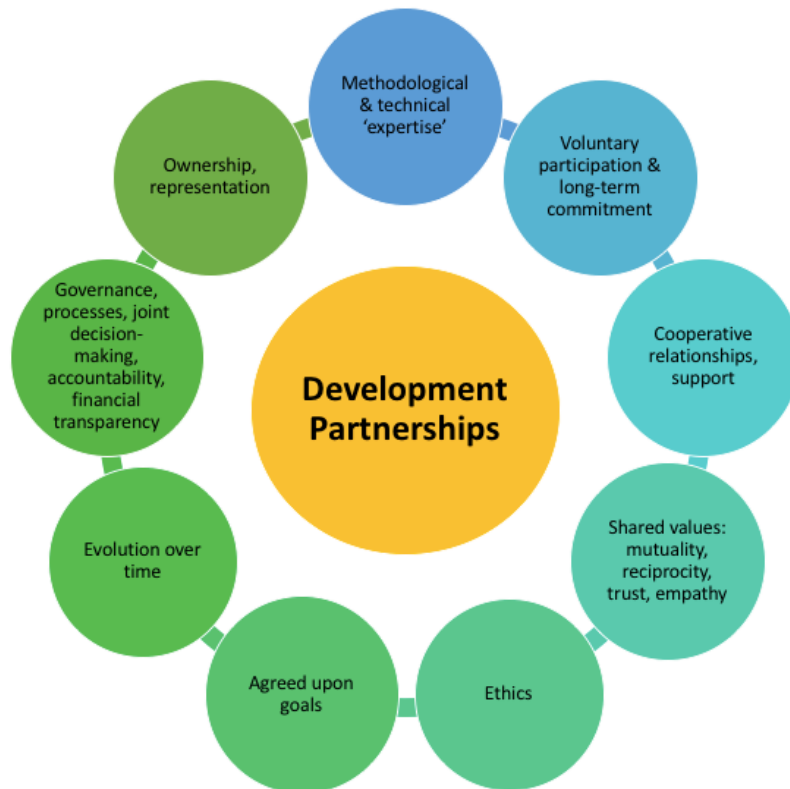
Figure 1: Elements of a partnership, adapted from Lister (2000) and Schaaf (2015)

Associated with this axiological value set, DPs are also believed to take on a 'boots on the ground' role that enables 'spotting new trends, successful innovations and/or raising the alarm when necessary' (Green, 2015, p. 14).

In the next section, I resituate the emergence of DPs within the past development decades. Partnerships have become a focus in ID since the 1960s when attention was drawn to the determinants and effects of global poverty (Campfens, 1996; Slater and Bell, 2002; Mercer, 2003). They started mostly as bilateral financial flows between donors and recipient countries, but multilateral agencies soon became central interlocutors in the aid sector (Menashy and Shields, 2017). I review how the rise of DPs has manifested since the 1990s.

2.3.2 The rise and anointment of development partnerships

Since the 1990s, and through the preponderant role of international institutions such as the World Bank (Contu and Girei, 2014), DPs have become 'an organising principle in international development' (Menashy and Shields, 2017, p. 8) for several reasons. Firstly, the concept of partnership aligns philosophically with a more humanist development articulated in the 1970s, which sought for participatory relations with communities, people-centred activities, and contextually relevant interventions (see section 2.1). Secondly, the use of the term can be considered a semantic strategy that allowed historical donor institutions (IFIs and bi- and multilateral donors) to escape the development critiques articulated in the 1980s and 1990s against the SAPs, with their conditional and unequal donor-recipient relations and structural power issues (Mercer, 2003). This historic shift towards partnerships as the appropriate mode of collaboration in ID has brought around the 'era of partnership' (Mercer, 2003, p. 743).

With the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes introduced by the World Bank since the end of the 1990s, the notion of partnership came hand in hand with that of ownership, a key development focus aimed at enforcing national decision-making and responsibility in the development endeavour (Contu and Girei, 2014). Finally, Slater and Bell (2002) contend that the term partnership conjures an idea of political neutrality of both the donor and the recipient stakeholders. The political neutrality is enforced by the expectation of a political alignment in donor-recipient relations in order to meet the development goals, and this political alignment can be considered in some instances to jeopardise and/or overlook national and geopolitical interests. However, the authors suggest that partnerships might in reality not be neutral at all, as they lead to 'development assimilation' by Southern countries come to accept agendas enforced by Northern donors (Slater and Bell, 2002, p. 350 drawing from Fowler, 2002). The neutrality/development assimilation, combined with expected unilateral partnership benefits (access to new technologies, ideas and knowledge) perpetuate relations of inequality, imbalance and power. The argument of neutrality is debunked in other empirical studies (see Baaz, 2005; Mawdsley, Savage and Kim, 2014; Gulrajani and Swiss, 2018).

Another key contributor to the DP trend was a rapidly changing aid landscape, with new stakeholders emerging, such as NGOs and civil society (discussed in section 2.1.). The dramatic increase in the number of NGOs and their profile rise in the 1990s in the midst of the neoliberal turn positioned them as viable development stakeholders. Lewis (2008) explains this increase by two main factors: NGOs bolstered ideals of participation and empowerment, very much aligned with the critical development turn of the 1990s. They also made for suitable alternatives to state-heavy policies and state-led development, in vogue with the neoliberal ideology promoting privatisation, good governance and flexibility. This second argument put forward by Lewis (2008) is concerned with cost-effective, efficient and accountable organisations of development. This increase contributed to the externalisation and privatisation of the channels of aid and development intervention, and saw an upsurge in new forms of DPs between donors and NGOs.

The shift towards civil society as the next development 'partner' brought other stakeholders to the forefront as suitable partners – such as CBOs, GROs, unions and informal movements (Lewis, 2008). The onus on accountability, performance, transparency and governance enforced the suitability of businesses as suitable development partners, as they could respond to managerial expectations of funders seeking to maximise the impact of development interventions. Finally, partnership 'as an organising principle in international development' (Menashy and Shields, 2017, p. 8) became so streamlined across different sectors, that organisations from different sectors became more weary of this relational modality and started to internalise the discursive argument in their own processes, with overlapping roles and responsibilities. Partnerships between organisations located across different spheres have therefore increased, with crossovers between spheres – notably, between CSOs from the public sphere and the state, and CSOs and the market sphere – considerably progressing in recent years (Brinkerhoff, 2002a; Cropper *et al.*, 2008; Knoke and Chen, 2009; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2011; Rathi, Given and Forcier, 2014). Such evolutions are depicted in Figure 2 below:
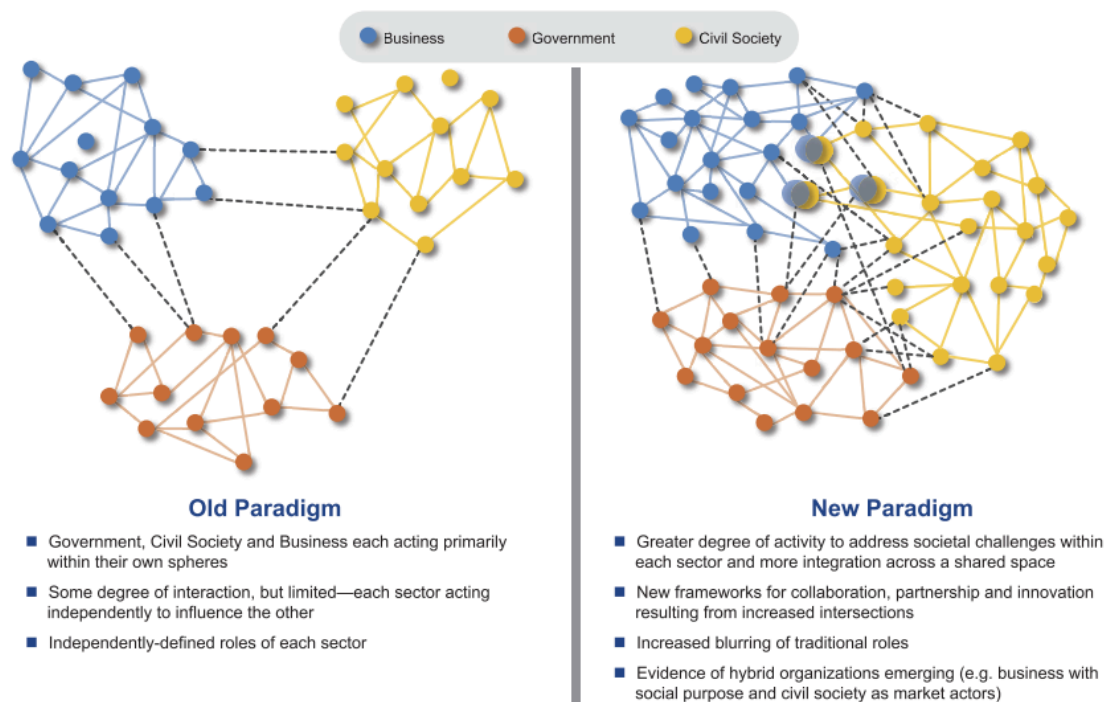
Figure 2: A new paradigm for cross-sectoral partnerships in societal development
Source: World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 10

Civil society comprise of NGOs, 'labour leaders, faith-based organizations, religious leaders and other civil society representatives' are now identified as the key stakeholders of 'societal development' (World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 3), with cross-sectoral partnerships becoming the norm.

In recent decades, the partnership era has been continuously enforced by global agendas such as the MDGs and SDGs, and frameworks such as the High-Level Forums for Development Effectiveness (I discuss these in the following section). Such overarching frameworks define partnerships as the only cross-sectoral relation that can support the eradication of poverty. The popularity of DPs has brought major donors to adopt the terminology and to self-identify as development partners; however, donors are not endorsing the partnership elements seen in Figure 1 (p. 48), and rather utilise the concept to perpetuate neoliberal agendas (Impey and Overton, 2014; Mawdsley, 2018). This has created a number of tensions in the concept of partnership: the term is upheld as a warrantee of meaningful relations in ID, but void of philosophical and ethical ground due to its dilution and appropriation by stakeholders which instrumentalise the term to their own

51

benefit (Brinkerhoff, 2002b; Tomlinson, 2005; Pickard, 2010; Schaaf, 2015). I develop a number of these tensions in section 2.3.4.

In the next section, I examine the weight of a number of global development frameworks in the framing of DPs, and how these have influenced the changes I have described throughout this section. DPs have emerged in a specific epoch of globalisation which has produced rigid frameworks upholding global targets and aims for actors working in ID (see Appendix I). These frameworks are influenced by managerial and results-oriented considerations as a tactical response to a 'fragmented, uncoordinated, and inefficient' development (Menashy and Shields, 2017, p. 3). In the following sections, I critically review founding frameworks of ID and analyse how they have influenced the shaping and the conceptualisation of DPs.

2.3.3   Global frameworks organising DPs in ID

2.3.3.1   DPs in the paradigm of aid effectiveness

Designing global frameworks to unify delivery modalities was aimed at harmonising aid interventions and structure the focus of development (see section 2.3.4) whilst satisfying international institutions' and donors' requests for more transparency on aid expenditure. This led to the 'a new era of international development' (Menashy and Shields, 2017, p. 3) that brought around 'new governance and aid arrangements' (p. 4). In recent decades, development has been organised around specific agendas such as the UN MDGs and SDGs, and frameworks such as the High-Level Meetings on Aid Effectiveness. These have played key roles in defining the development landscape. Throughout this section, I focus on the four high-level forums held between 2003 and 2011, and how they shaped development and DPs.

The High-Level Forum held in Rome in 2003 followed the Monterrey Consensus of 2002 on development financing. The Rome Declaration (2003) focused on the harmonisation of operational policies, procedures, and practices between global institutions and in-country partners. This declaration aimed to remedy the unproductive and high-cost implementation

of development interventions through the adoption of international principles, standards and practices (OECD, 2003). Partnerships referred to collaborations between governments and international and bilateral institutions, as well as the private sector. They were conceptualised as a means to uphold the MDGs initiated three years prior, and were not framed in other ways than relations developed between different organisational entities towards implementing development interventions or policies.

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness continued the focus on harmonisation articulated in the Rome Declaration. The Paris Declaration established a set of criteria to assess the performativity of development interventions and global aid, focusing on managerial indicators by advocating for improved partnerships, increased effectiveness and heightened impact (Development Assistance Committee, 2008). Themes such as effectiveness, partner and intervention alignment and harmonisation, increased data and accountability of results, highlighted the global tendency towards putting finance and aid accountability at the centre of ID. The declaration created a significant shift, articulating accountability and effectiveness as central to the development endeavour, in response to public critiques pressing for aid justification in a context of growing nationalisms. Its authors sought to humanise development and counter critiques of development as a colonial endeavour, by insisting on the collaborative nature of development: this was done in part through using the terms partner/partnership which were referenced 96 times throughout the document (Chambers, 2006).

The 2008 Accra Agenda enforced the Paris Declaration, and sought to rectify the discontent raised due to the absence of CSOs in the discussions leading to the 2005 declaration. For the first time in these forums, the role of CSOs in aid was recognised, and the argument was made for more 'effective and inclusive partnerships' (Development Assistance Committee, 2008). Therein, CSOs were understood generically to encompass all non-private, non-state, non-international institution organisations. The text recognised them as central actors with whom aid recipient countries should 'prepare, implement and monitor national development policies and plans' (p. 17). Partnerships with CSOs were encouraged towards 'reduc[ing] costly fragmentation of aid' (p. 17) and because their efforts 'complement those of governments and the private sector' (p. 20). The Accra Agenda advocated for 'greater transparency and accountability for the use of development resources' (p. 19), not

only for the countries and populations receiving the aid, but also for the citizens of each donor country.

More recently, the 2011 Busan Partnership expanded on the concept of development partnership, insisting on the 'participation of all actors, [thereby recognising] the diversity and complementarity of their functions' (Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2011, p. 1). The document promoted new priorities for development, such as participation, country-led coordination of interventions, localisation, South-South and triangular cooperation, sustainable development and resilience to disasters (Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2011). The onus on participation, and the focus on South-South and triangular cooperation showed a clear semantic and conceptual move from the previous finance-heavy frameworks. The document sought to articulate a shift from aid effectiveness – the stated aim of the past three forums – towards effective development cooperation[16].

Criticism of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda insisted on the fact that the focus on aid modalities and financial fluxes overlooked development outcomes (Gulrajani, 2014). Chambers (2006) sees in these frameworks the instrumentalisation of the 'preoccupation of aid' (p. 10). Although the Accra Agenda was shaped with strong input from CSOs, the inadequacy between a results-based and managerial accountability framework and long-term qualitative interventions was pointed out. Equally, the values enforced by DPs (trust, mutuality, respect, sustainable relations) are difficult to measure through quantitative indicators and short-term monitoring systems (Kindornay, 2011).

As a response to these exclusive frameworks, the Open Forum for CSO Effectiveness proposed two counter-frameworks. The 2010 Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles and the 2011 Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness are examples of how CSOs responded to the agreements. By redefining 'their' effectiveness, CSOs established foundational values and principles guiding interventions recognising the sustainable and human character of their practices. The

---

[16] More recent international events, such as the ones organised by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation in Mexico City (2014), in Nairobi (2016) or in New York (2019) are further examples of international multi-stakeholder gatherings that aim to enforce development effectiveness through partnerships, to "maximize the effectiveness of all forms of co-operation for development for the shared benefits of people, planet, prosperity and peace" (see the GPEDC website, visited on 09/12/2020).

Istanbul document (Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, 2010) is organised around eight principles that define CSO effectiveness: these are rights-based, equality-equity and democracy focused, and aim to promote sustainability, solidarity, transparency, shared knowledge and mutual learning. In the Siem Reap Consensus (Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, 2011), CSOs articulated development effectiveness as being 'linked to multi-faceted human and social development processes directly involving and empowering people living in poverty and discriminated and marginalized populations' (p. 6). Therefore, interventions will only be effective 'if they bring about sustainable change that addresses the causes, as well as the symptoms, of poverty, inequality and marginalization' (p. 6). This standpoint on effectiveness shines the spotlight on process above result.

A close examination of these texts shows to what extent the concepts of development and effectiveness are employed using different paradigms. In the Istanbul Principles (2010), it is not *aid* or *development* that are effective, it is the *CSOs* that are effective *as agents of change*. The focus on actors vs frameworks reinstates individuals, organisations and partnerships as subjects and enactors of ID. The Siem Reap Consensus (2011) introduces the ideas that poverty, inequality and marginalisation are systemic and structural, suggesting that a deeper, more comprehensive development is required. Finally, the semantics reveal how these texts have been drafted: we have a 'declaration' and an 'agenda' (prescriptive) opposing 'principles' and a 'consensus' (inclusive). Similarly, the Paris Agreement denotes a symbolic absence of significant terms such as power, rights, outcome, perspective, or relationships.

These four forums and the documents that ensued framed the foci of development around harmonisation, performance and effectiveness, be that of donors or other stakeholders, or of development procedures, interventions, priorities, beneficiaries and countries. Justifying how interventions respond to global issues, and what this meant in terms of quantifiable changes to the beneficiaries' lives became a strategic and unprecedented preoccupation. This has led to an increase in accountability/reporting requirements, the adherence to strict frameworks (time, resources, indicators, results, outcomes), and the standardisation of interventions and practices.

2.3.3.2 A paradigmatic shift: DPs in the development effectiveness paradigm

Busan in 2011 represented a crucial change from the previous three documents, and the forum was considered 'a pivot point in the emergence of a new 'development effectiveness' paradigm' (Mawdsley, Savage and Kim, 2014, p. 27). The new paradigm marked the end of a donor-recipient model of development relations, instating the start 'of a world of partners' (p. 30) and the emergence of a 'new global partnership' (p. 34).

The aim of this new paradigm was to address issues of power and domination between donor countries and developing countries. Issues of power and domination were attributed to top-down, post- (neo-)colonial and conditional development relations entertained between the North and the South, which would and could be remedied by horizontal, autonomous and mutual South-South collaborations (Eyben and Savage, 2013). The new global partnership formalised the arrival of new development contenders known as 'emerging countries' (Brazil, India and China). These were seen as key development stakeholders for South-South and triangular cooperation. The 'world of partners' redefined new geographies of development cooperation, and new partnerial modalities from which previously dominating stakeholders were cast aside (Eyben and Savage, 2013). Eyben and Savage (2013) are critical of this new dichotomised geography of aid: they observe how through this modified imagery of development, the South is seen as a homogenised entity which does not suffer issues of domination, oppression and hierarchy. The new development paradigm proposed in Busan assumes that this new model of development comes back to a purer form of charity devoid of interests and problematic relations fraught with inequality and power issues. In brief, Busan overlooks what Mawdsley, Savage and Kim (2014) define as the *politics of development* (p. 29).

Busan also formalised the inclusion of another key partner. Indeed, development effectiveness was still very much concerned with traditional technical assistance and 'new' activities such as trade, concessionary finance and foreign direct investment which were strongly held by private sector stakeholders (Eyben and Savage, 2013). The role of and place for the private sector in these forums were not a new occurrence. In the Rome Declaration (2003), for instance, the private sector was aggregated with CSOs: 'civil society including the private sector' (p. 10); whilst in the Paris Declaration (2005) and the Accra Agenda (2008),

the private sector had become a stakeholder among other development partners: 'middle-income countries, global funds, the private sector, civil society organisations' (p. 16). But none of the previous three documents had clarified what the private sector stood for, nor who its stakeholders were (Mawdsley, Savage and Kim, 2014).

In Busan, the private sector was represented by corporations and businesses invited to partake actively in the forum. These included Nokia, Nestlé, Coca Cola, Danone, Proctor and Gamble, and Motorola among others. The 'private sector' had never been so actively integrated, with sessions dedicated to private-public partnerships (PPP), and a clear steer towards PPP as the way forward in the new paradigm. The rise of PPPs and the formalised openness to the role of the private sector (industries and businesses) in development can be attributed to two factors: the influence of the G20 with put forth industries as key stakeholders of (economic) development, and the assumption that the Global South was more disposed to welcoming (and less prejudiced against) private sector investments (Eyben and Savage, 2013).

The alignment between Busan and the MDGs (discussed in section 2.1) highlights the porosity between global agendas setting the priorities of development cooperation, and frameworks articulating the financial procedures and policies of development aid. The SDGs are a clear indication of the continued porosity between the financially-oriented forums and the global social justice agendas. Notions of partnership evolved in the SDGs to include new stakeholders, practices and trends, and the private sector as a key development actor is heavily represented throughout the goals, with five of them specifically geared towards economic development, growth and consumption (Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production; Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth; Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure for example).

The emergence and development of partnerships in ID is directly correlated to the shifting discourses of economic and social development that I presented in section 2.1. If DPs were initially expected to bring around more human-centred ways of collaborating, they have since been integrated by finance- and management-focused trends of ID.

Throughout this section, I have shown the preponderant role played by global development frameworks in shaping the concept of partnership in development, and how this has contributed to the emergence of new stakeholders as suitable partners for the development

endeavour. In the next section, I discuss key contemporary debates that challenge the assumption that DPs are a good form of collaboration in ID. To this end, I review a number of contemporary debates around DPs. In line with a post-developmental critique of DPs, in the following section, I highlight the dichotomised conceptualisations and tensions around DPs, taking a closer look at the rhetorics, semantics and discourses of development.

2.3.4   Contemporary debates around DPs

As I have shown throughout this chapter, development and partnership have been discursively and strategically constructed as positive means to address global issues over the past 60 years. The affirmation or question of partnership as 'a good form of collaboration' and 'an efficient way of working together' permeates most of the management and development literatures (Lister, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2002b; Mercer, 2003; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2004; Overton and Storey, 2004; Tomlinson, 2005; Impey and Overton, 2014; Schaaf, 2015; Menashy and Shields, 2017).

Tomlinson (2005) interrogates this assumption: 'The presentation of partnership as 'good', but unclear in its meaning, invites consideration of the questions 'good in what way, and for whom?' (p. 1170). The lack of clarity lies in two specific places in this statement: the meaning of *partnership*, and the meaning of *good*. To examine the good in partnerships, she proposes to identify between the idealist and the pragmatic perspectives. The idealist perspective of partnerships corresponds to the *a priori* expectations and values associated with partnerships, which drive the motivation for partnership and shape the idea as desirable. The pragmatic perspective ensues from the enactment of partnership, and the experienced challenges in partnership implementation which reveals issues of trust, control and power. This schism between idealist and pragmatic perspectives is picked up by Standing (2010): 'Of course, the word 'partnership' is not exactly neutral. Is it a partnership of equals, with each gaining as much, and paying as much? Who is really in control? […] Unless it is defined, the term is dangerously vague. But the tendency is to favour 'partnership'. It has a nice cuddly sound to it' (p. 64). He proposes that defining the partnership allows reconciliation

of the idealist and pragmatic perspectives – however, epistemic considerations in the act of defining are overlooked.

This dichotomisation of partnerships between *what they ought to be* and *what they are* can be found widely across various literatures. For instance, Schaaf (2015) establishes a divide between the rhetoric (axiological underpinnings) and the reality (practices) of partnerships which are not aligned (in much the same way as Tomlinson, 2005, and Standing, 2010). Within this divide, partnerships benefit donors more than they do recipients, despite a rhetoric mostly concerned with demonstrating the opposite (mutuality, reciprocity, respect, participation, etc) (Schaaf, 2015). The concern with the partnership rhetoric is also shared by Overton and Storey (2004) who contend that rhetoric has contributed to mainstreaming partnerial relations as an intrinsic part of aid delivery. A similar rhetorical focus exists for Brinkerhoff (2002b), although she articulates a divide between the rhetoric (the promise) and the results (the practice) of DPs.

In these examples, the focus on the rhetorics, practices of and relations in partnerships, supposes that issues of power exist only at the individual and organisational levels, and that this divide exists only within the partnership vacuum. However, investigating partnerships in development cannot be removed from a broader examination of the sectoral and systemic legacies of centuries of power relations.

Taking a closer look at semantics reveals how orderly types of relation have been defined for development. *Community*, *civil society*, *partnerships* are development words turned concepts 'intended to invite automatic approval' (Standing, 2010, p. 57) as they simultaneously imply values and practices of mutuality. These types of social relations are also deeply enmeshed in gendered and patriarchal stereotypes as shown by Hart (2001). She exposes how the spatiality of development employs a binarised imaginary organised around 'understandings of time and space in which time is accorded active primacy while space appears as a passive container' (Hart, 2001, p. 655)[17]. Spaces of developmental interventions (namely the 'local') have to be attractive to donors to be envisaged as suitable

---

[17] The question of spatiality as site of power and dichotomisation is central to post-colonial studies, discussed in Fanon (1961) (colonised/coloniser, native and settler) and Said (1979) (through the Oriental/Westerner) for instance; post-development studies (the invention of the village; the local/global); and anti-development authors (centre vs periphery).

candidates in the developmental endeavour. This can be expanded to a number of development-specific groups/spaces/issues, which via their romanticised passivity, require external intervention in order to be salvaged from the poverty and the misery they find themselves in. Hart's (2001) critical spatial and semantic analysis reveals yet another level of the strategised semantic usage and its issues: development semantics are not only trends – they are revealing of deeply paradoxical and neoliberal tendencies to dichotomise the realms of development.

Contu and Girei (2014) contend that the partnership discourse can be problematised by examining the *processes of naming* what a partnership stands for. The act of naming is simultaneously political, allocating a performative character to partnerships by 'constitut[ing] specific subjects in specific ways (as partners)' (p. 18); and axiological, as it associates (and to some extent rigidifies) expected values which render invisible relations infused with power, oppression and domination. Re-placing the partnership discourse within the development history and global politics enables recognition of the legacies of the SAPs and other development turning points which have institutionalised modern relations of power. It also offers a means to examine critically the ongoing doings of international institutions and other development stakeholders, and the role of the partnership discourse in shaping a status quo that serves the neo-liberal political and economic global model.

Throughout this section, I have introduced development partnerships and discussed the conditions and epochs of their emergence. I have examined the global frameworks and development trends that have formalised DPs as the prime mode of collaborating in development. Current global agendas, frameworks and funding streams continue to presuppose their benefits, and are contributing to the appearance of new interlocutors with new priorities and modes of interventions. I then followed with a critical discussion of the semantic and discursive practices of DPs. In the next section, I review development and DPs in the context of Nepal, one of the study contexts.

2.4 A contextual discussion on ID and DP in Nepal

2.4.1 Situating development in Nepal

In Nepal, development has historically been correlated with foreign aid (Panday, 2011). This interconnection between development and foreign aid was reinforced in 1952, when Nepal joined the Colombo Plan for Cooperative, Economic, and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific and became a recipient of foreign aid. Throughout the post-Cold War period, Nepal alternatively received aid from India, China, the former Soviet Union, the US and Japan, as these countries competed for ideological, political or economic reasons in becoming major aid providers, mostly as a means to secure regional influence (Khadka, 1997; Sharma, 2011). This was done simultaneously via development and economic projects, turning economic growth and social development into inseparable processes.

Since 1952, Nepal has seen its national situation evolve with significant decline in child mortality, a prolonged life expectancy and increased adult literacy (Rigg *et al.*, 2016). However, as an 'aid dependent' country (Karkee and Comfort, 2016, p. 2), it continues to receive aid from bilateral and multilateral agencies, public-private partnerships, banks and financial institutions or INGOs (Karkee and Comfort, 2016; Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017). Today, China and India remain important funders (Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017) with USAID and DFID also at the forefront of the aid delivery (OECD, 2012; DFID Nepal, 2014; Karkee and Comfort, 2016).

The country is an active participant in the global effectiveness agendas, with the adherence to the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (Pradhan and Zellmann, 2018). Nepal has endorsed the SDGs, and has committed to include these in national policies and plans, with aims to move from a lower-income country status to a middle-income country by 2022 (Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017). However, the country still needs to improve and strengthen aid-related data that will enable it to monitor and record SDG changes (Pradhan and Zellmann, 2018).

The UK and Nepal have established longstanding historical relations and the UK still remains one of Nepal's 'top development partners'[18] through bilateral funding which aims to contribute to Nepal's fight against poverty and social/geographical inequalities by strengthening the country's economic development and better access to opportunities and services for marginalised groups (DFID Nepal, 2014). The bilateral funding has also focused on women, children and excluded groups in order to address the specific issues and challenges faced by vulnerable groups (DFID Nepal, 2009).

The key sectors that receive aid are education, health, economic and local development, roads and infrastructures (DFID Nepal, 2014; Karkee and Comfort, 2016; Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017). Interventions are often developed by funders according to their own priorities, strategies or understanding of the issues at hand: Rigg et al. (2016) discuss how major agencies focus on problems that are not Nepal-specific, reflecting common beliefs on the Global South 'development gap' (p. 2). Funders might overlook the effects these interventions could have on societal groups, thus omitting to address the underlying reasons of vulnerability. This brings us to question who is setting the agenda and defining the interventional priorities in Nepal, the role DPs are playing, and how they adapt.

2.4.2   Contemporary challenges in Nepal

Nepal has undergone significant political, social and economic changes in recent years: namely, a succession of major regime changes, from a dictatorship established in 1961 (Ulvila and Hossain, 2002) to a monarchy, followed by an armed conflict (Hutt, 2020). The most recent regime change was initiated in 2006 following the 2005 social uprising (Bhatta, 2016), and resulted in a democracy from 2008 (Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017). The 2015 Constitution is the first approved for The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2015). In 2017, the country organised its first local, provincial and federal parliamentary elections in 20 years (Pradhan and Zellmann, 2018).

---

[18] More on http://uk.nepalembassy.gov.np/nepal-uk-relations/ (accessed on 25/05/2018)

Overall, the country is subject to a number of internal and external constraints. Environmental disasters, such as uneven monsoon seasons, droughts, floods in remote areas, and the climate change crisis that deeply affects mountainous regions (Hutt, 2020) regularly plunge the country in a state of localised or national emergency. Social challenges, of which ethnic protests and tensions, class, gender and urban/rural inequalities, health issues (the recent measles outbreak of 2020) and education under-resourcing, contribute to territorial disparity and lack of opportunities.

Globalisation has seriously impacted national economic development. Labour migration, which in the past operated mostly between Nepal and bordering India, has become much more global, with over 2 million individuals (87% male) working overseas, with a focus on Malaysia and Gulf countries (Hutt, 2020). Remittances represented over 30 per cent of overall gross development product for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, representing $6.5 billion, thereby rendering Nepali remittances the fourth largest globally (Hutt, 2020). This dependency on inflows is believed to contribute to a certain economic vulnerability at a national level (DFID Nepal, 2014), while the lack of economic diversification has led to serious regional disparities: Kathmandu being well-resourced and logistically accessible, and further zones suffering very basic living standards and with basic human needs not being met (Hutt, 2020). Finally, political issues such as corruption, a centralised government, and the lack of restorative justice to address the legacies of decades of political instability and violence, continue to weigh heavy on the new democracy (DFID Nepal, 2014; Rigg and Oven, 2015; Rigg *et al.*, 2016; Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017; Hutt, 2020). The recent constitution of 2015 and the ongoing federalisation process are expected to rectify these concerns; however, political careers are still sought after as protection from legal action continues (Hutt, 2020).

Recent catastrophes have had and continue to have long-lasting effects. The 2008 flooding and the 2015 earthquakes have had a major influence on the country's economic development as they destroyed infrastructures, compromised service provision and delivery, and ostracised remote regions (Nordby, Claussen and Shakya, 2017). International agencies and donors allocated $4.4 billion to post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction. However, despite a nationwide commitment to rebuilding the destroyed houses and sites across Nepal, temporary shelters and ruins remain (Hutt, 2020) with issues of failing

accountability over the humanitarian and development funds allocations. The 2020 Covid-19 global pandemic has yet again brought about a humanitarian crisis, with the return of labour migrants seeing remote regions spike with cases. These events have plunged the country into a humanitarian crisis, and have contributed to reinforcing the oscillation between development and humanitarian aid dependency, with projects, donors and priorities being stiffened around new priorities, issues and groups.

Critics of development in Nepal (processes, agreements, actors, interference) are plentiful. Fujikura (2013) outlines three significant trends: the failure of development[19]; development as a depoliticising endeavour (drawing from James Ferguson's concept of *development as a machine*); and the intertwined characteristics of both the development and the modernisation/progress discourses. Thereby he highlights the structural and contextual issues and influences that shape development in Nepal, notably the divide between two major development actors – the government and the Maoist Party[20] both claiming to be 'on the side of true development' (Fujikura, 2013, p. 83). Panday (2011) also points out the tendency of the Nepali government to articulate development priorities depending on aid availability and trends, rather than on national needs. This leads Adhikari (2008) to question whether Nepal can *independently* shape its own development policies. Other critiques underline the absence of monitoring of funding expenditure following the 2015 earthquakes and reconstruction process (Hutt, 2020).

---

[19] Fujikura's (2013) analysis of the failure of development draws from Devendra Raj Panday's *idealised conceptualisation* of development (the West 'imposing' a vision of development as the democratic endeavour), hinting at a *situated nature* to development, and Nanda Shrestha's *misaligned practices*. In relation to the latter, this applies both at international level (foreign funding of national NGOs strongly encouraging the dissemination of neoliberal aspirations) and national levels (the prominence of uncontextualized interventions).

[20] Since Fujikura's (2013) analysis, the political landscape of Nepal has significantly evolved, and the stark contrast between these two actors is not as tangible, given the recent political change to a federalised system (Hutt, 2020) and a national focus on economic development through mega-projects. However, the divide in perspectives of what stands for 'true development' remains.

2.4.3 Development actors and DPs in Nepal

In Nepal, *partnership* has been largely conflated with *ownership* and balanced power in development relations (see Panday, 2011; Contu and Girei, 2014). This might contribute to explaining the preponderant role of the Social Welfare Council (SWC) as a key state institution in the development arena in Nepal. The SWC is 'responsible for the promotion, facilitation, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the non-governmental social organizations in Nepal' (Social Welfare Council) and determines the modalities and practices for Nepali development national and international actors. Nepal has recorded a dramatic increase in the number of NGOs over the past years, with 254 international NGOs[21] (INGOs) working under agreement in 2017 and 50,393 national NGOs affiliated in 2019[22] (Karkee and Comfort, 2016). A majority of these NGOs work in community and rural development services (over 32,000), youth services or women services[23].

In this busy development landscape, the aim of the SWC is to harmonise relations between external and internal development actors. According to the Social Welfare Act of 1992, INGOs must 'collaborate and coordinate' with local NGOs for the implementation of their projects (SWC, 1992, p. 7). This means that INGOs cannot design and implement development interventions without being affiliated to a Nepali NGO, vetted by the SWC as a suitable affiliation, and controlled on an annual basis by the SWC. This could explain the increase in recorded NGOs, created as a response to available funding in the aim of becoming a national counterpart to international partners. This sudden raise also suggests that national NGOs do not have strong roots or proper social support (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). The SWC determines a number of interventional criteria for both national and international NGOs. One of the guideline criteria is that interventions should provide 40% of 'soft' input (training, capacity building, etc.) and 60% 'hard' input (physical and tangible

---

[21] Of which, 27 are registered in the UK (the UK is ranked second most represented country in terms of NGOs, after USA that counts 75 NGOs in Nepal). More information on http://www.swc.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/INGOs-detail-information-2072_073-Falgun-Masant.pdf

and http://swc.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/INGO-Chart.pdf (accessed 26/09/2019)

[22] http://swc.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/NGOs-affiliated-to-SWC.pdf (accessed 26/09/2019)

[23] http://swc.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/NGOs-Sectorwise-Chart.pdf (accessed 26/09/2019)

goods such as buildings, irrigation systems, etc.), whatever the type of intervention and whatever the expressed or identified needs.

If the role of the SWC goes mostly uninterrogated, that is not the case for the role and place of NGOs (Panday, 2011; Green, 2015; IARAN, 2017). Questions have been raised about the governance of Nepali NGOs and the fact that elites seem to occupy positions of power in these organisations (Ulvila and Hossain, 2002; Tanala, 2011; Karkee and Comfort, 2016). Other scholars (Ulvila and Hossain, 2002; Rigg *et al.*, 2016) ask whether and how NGOs are really addressing the roots of vulnerability and precarity, thus acknowledging the structural and systemic causes and roots of poverty.

With the recent federalisation process instituted in the 2015 Constitution (the implementation started in 2019 but will be ongoing for several years), the development arena is expected to change significantly, with the emergence of new governance actors at local levels named *gaunpalinkas*[24]. These will be responsible for the enactment of local agendas and will in effect be responsible for budgets directly with the communities. These *gaunpalinkas* are becoming new discussion partners for NGOs and INGOs working in remote areas, and will be held accountable by the community, whilst holding the NGOs locally accountable for their work.

Requests for more transparency and accountability of program efficiency and aid flows (Pradhan and Zellmann, 2018) have led to the creation of the Aid Management Platform[25], the Post-Earthquake Assistance Portal[26], and the Association of International NGOs in Nepal[27] amongst others created by UK and Nepali actors.

Initiatives towards bringing together UK-based NGOs working in Nepal are also taking place in the UK[28]. This may be seen as a response to the appeal of international researchers to cease competitive practices (securing funding or public visibility) and modify interventions in order to adapt to societal and global challenges (Green, 2015; IARAN, 2017). According to

---

[24] *Gaunpalinka* means 'rural municipality'. In the new federalisation system, the country is structured around three levels of government: federal, provincial (seven provinces) and local (753 *gaunpalinkas* and wards).

[25] http://amis.mof.gov.np/portal/ (accessed 29/05/2018)

[26] http://earthquake.mof.gov.np/portal/ (accessed 29/05/2018)

[27] http://www.ain.org.np/ (accessed 29/05/2018)

[28] Such as BRANNGO, the Britain and Nepal NGO Network: more on https://www.branngo.org/ and https://www.mondofoundation.org/collaborating-to-greater-impact/ (accessed 30/05/2018)

such authors, ecosystemic changes and more collaborative ways of interacting will enable INGOs to remain suitable actors in the development and humanitarian arena.

In this section, I have provided an overview of the recent development trends and concerns faced by Nepal. Providing a situated introduction to the ID sector in Nepal is fundamental to better understanding the empirical materials I analyse in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 – namely, the type of DPs that can be set up in Nepal, and the important role played by the SWC. The ongoing federalisation process is also a crucial feature of the ID sector, enabling new actors and geographies of development to emerge. Similarly, the legacies of the 2015 earthquakes on the contemporary development landscape in Nepal was also apparent throughout the fieldwork and has profoundly marked the sector.

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to reviewing key concepts of the thesis, namely: development, partnerships and development partnerships. For the purpose of the review, I chose to situate the historical and contextual emergence of these concepts within the complex landscape of the past 60 years; this allowed me to highlight the extent to which the concepts are deeply contested and rooted in specific epochs.

What appears clearly throughout this chapter is how these concepts are similarly infused with notions of morality and rhetorics of cooperation and support; and how, in practice, they are fraught with structural and institutional issues relating to domination, power asymmetries and unilateral interests. Examining DPs in relation to the historic trends and foci of ID has shown how global frameworks have substantially influenced the shaping of DPs and the inclusion of new development stakeholders.

With contemporary challenges focused on the reality of partnerships – how they are enacted and how they unfold – the research at hand appears all the more relevant. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 draw from the different discussions developed throughout this chapter to investigate the SDP and explore the schism between rhetorics (I examine these through the partnership narratives) and partnerial relations and practices.

CHAPTER 3: POWER IN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on reviewing theories of power categorised as a) unidimensional; b) multi-dimensional; and c) 'radical'. The aim of the review is to introduce a selection of prominent theories and analytical unidimensional, multi-dimensional and 'radical' frameworks. For each of these frameworks, I refer to examples of empirical studies to illuminate how each conceptualisation of power has been applied and discuss how the understandings of power in DPs have contributed through these studies. This chapter outlines different perspectives on power and how existing frameworks have been applied to the ID sector. The material I present here relates more specifically to RQ2 and RQ3 on the production and mitigation of power asymmetries in DPs.

The chapter is in three sections. The first section presents unidimensional and multi-dimensional conceptualisations of power. I briefly introduce theoretical works from Dahl and his constituents of power, Bachrach and Baratz and their non-decision-making, as well as the notions of direct and indirect influence, and finally Lukes with the idea of interests; and how these authors have built from each other to expand the framing of power. I follow with a discussion on how these conceptualisations have been applied to examine DPs.

The second section focuses on Foucault's 'ultra-radical'[29] approach to power. I highlight how this conceptualisation vastly diverges from previous dimensional theories of power, notably through his work on power/knowledge, discourse and *régimes* of truth. I introduce analytical

---

[29] According to Lukes (2005), Foucault's view on power is 'ultra-radical' for the following reasons: firstly, he foregoes the dimensional conceptualisation of power and develops a connection between power and knowledge, rather than relations operating between different parties as previously described in dimensional approaches. Secondly, he considers power as co-extensive, constitutive and productive of social relations. Thirdly – as I show in the coming section – Foucault sought to highlight the different forms of power (capillary disciplinary, sovereign) and their impacts on social relations, the body and the weight of institutions on the construction of self.

frameworks developed by Foucault – archaeology and genealogy –, followed by his conceptualisations of the notion of power as exercised and also of resistance, and how these can inform the examination of DPs.

The final section of this chapter examines two more contemporary frameworks used to explore power empirically, namely: Barnett and Duvall's power taxonomy and Gaventa's Power Cube. These two frameworks are intended to analyse power as pluriform, productive and positive (however, in Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy, negative effects of power are also recognised). I then discuss how intersecting frameworks could support my research in light of my RQs.

3.1   Dimensional conceptualisations of power

Throughout this section, I introduce conceptualisations of power that have tended to employ a dimensional perspective. I focus on the works of four key scholars, including Dahl (one-dimensional power), Bachrach and Baratz (two-dimensional power), and Lukes (three-dimensional power). I discuss the analytical and methodological application of each of these frameworks, and examine how they have been used to inform aspects of a critical examination of power in DPs.

3.1.1   One-dimensional power – Dahl

Dahl (1957) devised a *one-dimensional power framework* that endeavours to map out how power is used by one partner over another (Lister, 2000; Crawford, 2003; Lukes, 2015): '*A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do*' (Dahl, 1957, pp. 202-203). He identifies four different *constituents of power*: the base, the means, the scope and the amount. The base stands for the resources that A can use to influence B's behaviour; the means represent the specific actions by which A can make actual use of these resources (the interorganisational linkages); the scope is the set of specific actions that A – by using its means of power – can get B to perform; and the amount

of power equates to the increase in the probability of B actually performing some specific action due to A using its means of power (Lister, 2000).

Dahl conceptualises power in a functionalist manner (Lotia and Hardy, 2008): power is considered a possession held by an entity who can use it as a means to exercise control and authority over another entity devoid or limited in power. It is both interactional – it necessitates a minimum of two parties involved in a *relationship of unequals* – and polarising – ascribing rigid roles and status of superiority and inferiority to each party. Dahl's power is causal, linear and constricted, as it exists solely within this relationship of unequals and does not account for any external influence.

His conceptualisation of power is coercive and competitive with a focus on the productive outcomes of the exercise of power. It draws on mechanisms such as control, negotiation, manipulation and bribery to achieve the expected productive outcomes. The underlying argument is that more can be achieved by constraining partners. In this framework, power is implemented to serve only one entity to the detriment of another. Power becomes an instrument for production, a strategical means towards increasing the impact of the partnership. However, as pointed out by Lotia and Hardy (2008), when operationalised through a functionalist prism 'the negative consequences of collaboration such as exploitation, unfairness, abuse and the misuse of power' (p. 7) for the organisations, individuals and settings involved are overlooked. In the table below, I summarise Dahl's (1957) conceptualisation by pointing to the nature, characteristics and mechanisms of power:

	Characteristics	Nature	Mechanisms
Dahl's one-dimensional power	Power is a possession held by the powerful over the powerless Power is a resource used by the powerful to force the powerless into action	Functionalist Productivist Behavioural Agential Competitive	Control Negotiation Manipulation Bribery Coercion

Table 1: An overview of the concept of power according to Dahl (1957)

Dahl's conceptualisation was argued to oversimplify power as it focused only on the efforts made by party A to control party B, whilst overlooking the invisible and strategic influence of the parties (Gaventa, 1980; Lukes, 2005). The coming sections show how other authors have built on and expand his approach to respond to these criticisms.

Dahl's power framework has been used in development studies to analyse how power manifests and is negotiated between organisations involved in a DP. In her analysis of a DP between an Northern NGO (NNGO) based in the US and its partner Southern NGO (SNGO) in Central America, Lister (2000) looks at issues relating to power asymmetries using Dahl's (1957) power analytical framework. Her application of the framework reveals that within the constellation of organisations she studied, power manifests clearly through each constituent (base, means, scope and amount).

Lister focuses on power through the prisms of inter-partnerial dependency and control, with her findings suggesting that the base of power deals intrinsically with issues of resource (access, possession, dependency or imbalance) – notably, who holds them and who lacks them. The means of power carry on the preponderant role of individual and interindividual relations (between donors/NNGO and NNGO/SNGO) that eclipse structured communicational mechanisms and problematise the question of formalised means of grievance expression and conflict resolution. The scope of power addresses the question of organisational influence, that is, how operational, structural or strategic influence are exerted through organisations to negotiate with the partners and leverage different outcomes than the ones imposed by the system or the 'stronger partner'. According to Lister's study, the power runs linearly from the donor to the NNGO to the SNGO, with the SNGO holding the least influence over any of the other partners, whilst the NNGO has tailored activities to match the donors' requirements, thus holding limited influence. Finally, the amount of power reveals a differentiated exercise of power, with heightened power between donor and NNGO, and lesser power between NNGO and SNGO. Throughout the entirety of the study, the NNGO holds a 'middle' role, engaged in relations of power NNGO/donor and NNGO/SNGO. However, the power issues playing out directly between the donor/SNGO are overlooked and not included in the analysis.

Lister's (2000) application of Dahl's framework offers interesting avenues for reflection on the relations between different parties involved in a partnership. However, it omits the

contextual, systemic or institutionalised characteristics of power, as well as the invisible and intangible means and systems through which power is elsewhere argued to be consolidated, internalised or negotiated (e.g. Freire, 1996, 2005; Lister, 2000; Crawford, 2003; Lukes, 2015). Wider criticism of the approach argued by Lukes (2015) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962) problematise Dahl's framework as grounded in several underlying assumptions, including that power is: stable; siloed in a vacuum; impermeable to external constraints and challenges; only plays out throughout tangible relations; operates through influence and dependency; and its analysis carries on the operationalisation of power (how it is practically enacted, rather than the interests, agenda setting or non-decision-making of parties – see the following sections) [30].

In the following section, I show how scholars have built on Dahl's conceptualisation of power, namely by addressing the weaknesses it contains, to develop subsequent models.

3.1.2   Two-dimensional power – Bachrach and Baratz

In an attempt to go beyond the unidimensional and behavioural conceptualisation of power developed by Dahl (1957), Bachrach and Baratz (1962) proposed that power is *two-dimensional* and has two distinct faces. They use Dahl's scope of power (the operational or structural influence of one organisation over another) and expand this by also addressing the *interests* that each party have in reinforcing power.

A key difference in the two-dimensional framework is that power is conceptualised as also existing in states of 'non-decision making' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). A state of non-decision-making is symbolically four-folded according to Bachrach and Baratz (1962): it encompasses not being able to access the spaces to discuss certain issues (exclusion); not being able to bring these issues to the forefront of discussions when access is granted because efforts have been made to focus on other issues (detraction); not being able to trust that the issues will be dealt with accordingly (institutional conflict); or that retaliation will emanate from bringing given issues forward (punishment). The efforts made by A to

---

[30] A broader critique of Dahl's shortcomings can be found in Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; and Lukes, 2015.

outcast specific issues or spaces from the decision-making realm drives B to internalise bias which will prevent B from articulating an issue or to believe in the spaces that are created and offered to deal with the issue.

Within this framework, power is not solely a possession or an action of one entity over another as Dahl argues; it also appears in the efforts and interests of one entity to modify the ecosystem in order for that power to become institutionalised. The efforts – seen as the *direct or indirect influence* of powerful groups over powerless groups – aim to render social issues either visible or invisible, and spaces to debate these accessible or inaccessible. As seen in the table below, these efforts then manifest through contestation, prioritisation, silencing, omission or advocating/lobbying of issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Lotia and Hardy, 2008). Influences such as these could be seen at play through controlling the media, governing bodies, political entities, policy making, actions of elite groups for example. Through the exercise of these influences, issues are validated or invalidated, specific parties are either legitimated or delegitimated, and thereby, issues that might be key concerns to particular groups can become suppressed. In the following table, I summarise the nature, characteristics and mechanisms of power according to Bachrach and Baratz's (1967) conceptualisation:

	Characteristics	Nature	Mechanisms
Bacharach and Baratz's two-dimensional power	Power is a possession held by the powerful over the powerless Power is a resource used by the powerful to force the powerless into action and to exclude both participants and issues from decision-making processes Power is used to set the political agenda	Functionalist Behavioural Productivist Agential Exploitative Suppressive Competitive	Exclusion Control Inaction (De)Legitimation Manipulation Bribery 'Mobilisation of bias'

Table 2: An overview of the concept of power according to Bachrach and Baratz (1962)

Bachrach and Baratz, (1962, p. 952) outline key steps to examine power that include a structural and institutional analysis of who benefits from power through influence, non-decision-making and participation which was not included in Dahl's conceptualisation:

1. *Analysis of the 'mobilisation of bias' within the setting – that is, which are 'the dominant values, the myths and the established political procedures and rules of the game'*

2. *Examination of who gains and who loses from this bias – these might be groups or individuals*

3. *Investigation of the 'dynamics of non-decision making' – 'the extent to which and the manner in which the status quo-oriented persons and groups influence those community values and those political institutions [...] which tend to limit the scope of actual decision-making on 'safe' issues'*

4. *Analysis of the 'participation in decision-making of concrete issues'*

As the analytic method shown above makes explicit, the states of non-decision-making are conditioned and/or facilitate *participation* and non-participation, and are influenced by the *reputation* of power that induces fear and sense of vulnerability, thereby curtailing action (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Gaventa, 1980). According to Dahl, the notion of efforts is contained to those made by A for B to perform, concluding with B's non-performance or B's under-performance; the efforts are relational and strategic. With Bachrach and Baratz, the efforts culminate in the influence displayed to shape the agenda, defining what grievances emerge or are silenced: the efforts are simultaneously political and strategic.

Despite the key differences between Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz's conceptualisations of power, scholars have drawn on and incorporated aspects from both frameworks in their empirical studies. For example Elbers and Schulpen (2011) combined aspects of each in their examination of partnerships between three aid agencies and their local partners in Ghana, India, and Nicaragua. In their analysis, they emphasise the notion of *influence*, arguing that power asymmetries can be examined through the levels of influence in decision-making exercised by each party involved in the partnership. They find that the sets of rules that

define decision-making processes and outcomes are developed at an intra-partnership[31] level and that these processes and outcomes are the space of participation (and exclusion). Their study reveals that topics range from exclusionary (when decisions are treated as 'internal' and contained to donor arenas) to co-decisionary (when donors and partners work together towards shaping the project design and implementation) with a variety of relational modalities in between. Inclusion in decision-making depends on the *quality* of the relationship between the donors and the CSO, and the donors' involvement in the projects implemented by the CSO. The influence is also analysed in terms of agenda-setting opportunities, which interestingly, is not correlated with decision-making. This suggests that *consultation* and *negotiation* are key characteristics of agenda-setting as dynamics that might enable influence to shift, and possibly allow the CSOs to levy favourable relations with donors to convince them of some flexibility.

Bachrach and Baratz's conceptualisation of power builds on and advances Dahl's notion of unidimensional power to elaborate the significance of influence, agenda-setting and non-decision making. However, it does not account for the social and collective forces that construct behaviour, desires and relations as discussed in the next section.

3.1.3   Three-dimensional power – Lukes

Lukes (2005) draws from the work of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz to develop a theory of power that surpasses the functionalist, behavioural and coercive conceptualisations previously proposed. For Lukes, power holds *three dimensions,* proposing that power goes beyond intra-individual relationships (as formulated by Dahl, 1957) and the agenda-setting addendum (proposed by Bachrach and Baratz, 1962), to explain power as strongly informed by social and collective forces that will act against potential issues or latent conflict (Lukes, 2005).

---

[31] The spatial conceptualisation of the *intra-partnership* concerns the relations, practices and strategies between the organisations involved in the DP.

Lukes draws attention to the way in which a given problem is conceptualised and who defines the problem, and the social construct of behaviour, desire and action by powerful groups that enjoin powerless groups to aspire for and act in ways that are not in their direct interest (Lister, 2000, p. 230). Power equates to 'the imposition of some significant constraint upon an agent or agents' desires, purposes or interests, which it frustrates, prevents from fulfilment or even from being formulated' (Lukes, 2005, p. 113). The influence bypasses the mere inter-individual scope showcased in Dahl's one-dimensional power conceptualisation, and it exceeds the agenda-controlling addendum proposed in Bachrach and Baratz's two-dimensional power. Here, constraints are argued to mould desires, beliefs, aspirations, values and identities, and render the individual indivisible from the ecosystem and the norms that prevail within it (Gaventa, 1980). Thereby, Lukes favours 'a notion of power as a capacity or an ability' (Raffnsøe, Mennicken and Miller, 2019, p. 161).

Lukes argues that *what has not happened* and *what is not overt* play a major role in defining interests and yielding action. With this conceptualisation, a distinct transition occurs from an analysis of what exists and what is manifest (per Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz) to what has not materialised or manifested (yet), and therefore might or might not, both in terms of *issue* and *conflict*. The conflict's latency, as defined by Lukes (2005, p. 153), refers to '[the assumption] that there would be a conflict of wants or preferences between those exercising power and those subject to it, were the latter to become aware of their interests'[32]. As seen in the table below, Lukes' potentialist perspective implies that in keeping (potential) issues from arising or from reaching political realms, and by controlling conflicts that could contribute to the raising of these issues, 'those exercising power' exercise their interests[33]. He asks ''what counts as a significant manner?', 'what makes A's affecting B significant?'' (p. 30), as the significance reveals the interests and displays the actions taken to satisfy those interests.

---

[32] This definition implies a rather linear and finite process towards conflict. As such, it poses a number of philosophical quandaries: firstly, it implies some pre-articulated beliefs about the behaviours of a given group; secondly, that 'those subject to [power]' are not aware of their interests and need to be made or become aware (suggesting interests are invariably externalised); thirdly, that awareness raising is the sole reason for conflict to become active and manifest.

[33] Lukes (2005) abides by the 'radical' definition of interests: 'people's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests, and, in such cases, relates the latter to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice' (p. 38).

	Characteristics	Nature	Mechanisms
Lukes three-dimensional power	Power is a possession held by the powerful over the powerless	Functionalist	Exclusion
		Exploitative	Manipulation
	Power is a resource used by the powerful to force the powerless into action and to exclude both participants and issues from decision-making processes	Behavioural	Control (of beings, information and processes of socialisation)
		Agential	
		Systemic	
		Societal	
	Power is used by the powerful to shape and influence the desires, aspirations and agency of the powerless, and how they reflect on the issues that they experience		Domination
			(De)Legitimation
			Objectification
	Power is an instrument used to enforce social norms and beliefs		Oppression

Table 3: An overview of the concept of power according to Lukes (2005)

Lukes' framework introduces a more critical reading of power (Lotia and Hardy, 2008) than previously found in the works of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz. For Lukes, power is not merely contained within the inter-individual sphere, or the influences exercised by one party to satisfy their own interests; rather it opens to the mechanisms and processes that shape other's desires and aspirations. Although Lukes' work shows a more complex picture of power, it also renders more complicated the analytical process to examine power. Crawford (2003) used Lukes' conceptualisation of power in his investigation of the 'Partnership for Governance Reform' that took place in Indonesia at the end 1990s which brought together national bodies and the international community with the aim of shaping a governance and political transition. Through this study, Crawford (2003) exposes systemic power relations within the development sector as manifesting through the partnership rhetoric. The rhetoric is shown to enjoin a collaborative and egalitarian conceptualisation of the relations between national government bodies and the international actors.

Crawford (2003) explains how the difficulties in using Luke's framework are pluri-folded: in the first instance, 'the challenge in three-dimensional-type situations is to find out what the exercise of power prevents people from doing or thinking' (Crawford, 2003, p. 144).

Identifying actions or thoughts following Lukes' conceptualisation enjoins the researcher to determine what people *would have done* differently. This would require analysing the probability for a particular different outcome in action or thought, but also how an issue would have arisen if the influences displayed by the powerful had not prevailed (Gaventa, 1980; Lukes, 2005). The complexity of such a task is heightened by the fact that, according to Lukes, power can lead to inaction, might be unconscious, and can be exercised not only by individuals, but groups (Crawford, 2003; Lukes, 2005). To respond to these shortcomings, Gaventa (1980) sought to articulate the following methodological sequence as a practical take on Lukes' three-dimensions (pp. 15–16):

- ✓ *Specifying the means through which power influences, shapes or determines conceptions of necessities, possibilities, and strategies of challenge in situations of latent conflict*

- ✓ *Studying social myths, language, and symbols, and how they are shaped or manipulated in power processes*

- ✓ *Studying the communication of information – what is communicated, how it is communicated*

- ✓ *Examination of how the social legitimations are developed around the dominant entity, and instilled as roles or beliefs in the dominated entity*

- ✓ *Locating the power processes behind the social construction of meaning and patterns that induce action or inaction, and that serve the powerful to the detriment of the powerless*

In the chapter so far, I have introduced and discussed a selection of different perspectives on power. A dimensional power analysis allows one to look at a number of widely known power issues within DPs and between the organisations involved in a DP. The journey through *dimensions and relations* of power – encompassing possession, influence, interests, inaction, bias, participation – sheds light on organisational practices and strategies, and sector-wide asymmetries from a spatial and interrelational perspective.

Dimensional power is not only a concentric pathway from

'A over B' →

    'A over B and the efforts to detract B from changing its conditions' →

        'A over B, the efforts made to keep B powerless and the ecosystemic shaping of norms and beliefs'.

However, the scholars I have discussed have not addressed power as a systemic, structural and societal issue (to some extent, Lukes initiates such a turn, but continues to consider power as relational rather than diffused). Approaching power in a solely relational or spatial capacity overlooks the complexity of the systems in which we find ourselves, and how power is exercised. In the next section, I discuss how critical conceptualisations of power were developed to include and focus on other facets of power.

3.2 Foucault's view on power

In this section, I introduce Foucault's ideas on power, which, rather than building on previous dimensional conceptualisations such as those introduced in the previous section, reject this view to offer an alternative conceptualisation. I focus specifically on some of the key Foucauldian concepts of power, knowledge, discourse and related terminology. I then outline Foucault's analytical approach to account for the historical development of knowledge and power relations.

3.2.1 Defining Foucauldian key concepts

3.2.1.1 Philosophical underpinnings

In this section, I focus on Foucault's (1926-1984) work around power, knowledge and discourse, and how these three concepts intersect. As a historian and a philosopher, his

studies draw influence from critical theorists and philosophers such as Marx, Althusser, Kant and Nietzsche (Garland, 2014) in his work on power, inequalities and structures (Mills, 2003; Howell, 2013b).

Foucault's take on power has been used extensively across the social sciences (see for example Kearins and Hooper, 2002; Lehman, 2005 – for studies on genealogy and accountancy; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014 – for a political analysis of resistance). Raffnsøe, Mennicken and Miller (2017) undertook an analysis of how Foucault's work has been integrated, explored and expanded in organisational studies. They found that organisation studies scholars have notably drawn influence from Foucault in theorising issues ranging from discipline, human resource management, domination, labour process, among other themes. Foucault's works on power/subject, genealogy and governmentality still play a major role in organisational theory and analysis (Välikangas and Seeck, 2011). He has also largely contributed to the emergence of critical management studies and the analysis of discourse in corporate strategies (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000, 2011b; Välikangas and Seeck, 2011; Raffnsøe, Mennicken and Miller, 2019). Post-developmental and postcolonial scholars have also drawn upon Foucault's work on power/knowledge and discourse to contest the development system as a whole, and specific practices and discourses in particular (Rahnema, 1991; Mills, 2003; Escobar, 2005; Peet and Hartwick, 2009; Sachs, 2010; see sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2). Similarly, feminist and Southern theorists have drawn from theories of power/knowledge into debates about the politics of knowledge (Mohanty, 1984; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Despite being a remarkably influential and widespread author, there are critics of Foucault's conceptualisation of power (see for example Baudrillard (1977); Giddens, Deleuze, Lukes (2005); Sahlins (2002); Al-Amoudi (2007)).

3.2.1.2   'Power is everywhere'

Foucault developed what was deemed by some an ultra-radical conceptualisation of power (Lukes, 2005). His understanding of power evolved in relation to specific projects and issues that he was focusing on, notably how power/knowledge operates in specific social and

institutional sites such as prisons and mental health facilities, and power in relation to sexuality and the body, and criminology (Lukes, 2005). His work explored how systems, institutions and structures promote regimes of truth around abnormality, deviancy, and difference. Contrary to dimensional conceptualisations discussed in the previous two sections, he approaches power as *multiple, ubiquitous* and *continuous*: it is spatial and geographical, structural and institutional, fluctuating and mobile, interactional and cumulative. Foucault considers power to be ''always already there, that one is never 'outside' it'' (Foucault, 1980, p. 141). Power is everywhere, constitutive of every relation (Foucault, 1979). His successive conceptualisations highlighted:

'Power in its regional and local forms and institutions; power at levels other than conscious intention; power as something that circulated as chains and networks; power starting from infinitesimal personal relations and then colonized by ever more general mechanisms into forms of global domination; power exercised through the formation and accumulation of accredited knowledge; and so on'.

(Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p. 207).

In dimensional-type conceptualisations, power had been considered a possession (as in Dahl), a strategy (in Bachrach and Baratz) or played out in specific relations – held by the powerful to the detriment of the powerless – a hierarchical exercise of control and authority, articulated around the divide of those who have it and those who lack it. Foucault rejects this view as inadequate in modern formations of society, highlighting its 'incessant, constant and wholly relational' (Crowley, 2009, p. 342) circulation. The dynamic nature of power is explained as 'the individual is both subjugated and constituted through power and an actor who disseminates it' (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 108). Foucault argues that to consider power as solely coercive or repressive (Garland, 2014), as it had previously been conceptualised in Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz equates to 'a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power' (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). He contends that power would be 'a fragile thing' if its only functions were negative (utilised only towards censorship, repression or exclusion for example) (Foucault, 1980, p. 59).

Instead, he claims that 'power is strong' (1980, p. 59) and productive as it yields multiform dominations and resistances, 'traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (p. 119). The productive nature of power can be seen as one of Foucault's predominant contributions, offering new ways to consider social and structural relations and struggles (Lukes, 2005). As such, Foucault's conceptualisations operate a significant shift from previous work on power:

'[From] an exclusion or a ''dividing practice'', to a more positive concept of power as ''productive'', to the hybrid formulation of ''power–knowledge'', to power as incitement or excitation involving ''spirals of power–pleasure'', to power as ''action upon action'' and ''the conduct of conduct'', and finally to power as productive of subjects and productive of truth'.

(Garland, 2014, p. 366 citing Foucault, 2000)

Foucault (1978, 1979) identifies three forms of power: capillary/disciplinary power, biopower, and sovereign power. The capillary and disciplinary form is prescriptive and authoritative, enacted by institutions and experts through observation, correction, punishment or disciplinary action. Capillary and disciplinary power are concerned with *normalisation*, that is: 'mold[ing] the ways individuals relate to themselves and each other' (Scott, 2009, p. 360), carried out by establishing strict guidelines destined to assert what consists of socially acceptable beliefs, bodies and behaviours, and defining normality/abnormality. This form of power can be found operating in prisons, schools, the army and medical institutions, and consists of disciplinary strategies such as observation, surveillance, discipline, punishment and reward. It produces subjects who are homogeneous: 'disciplinary power shapes and normalises subjects who eventually become, speak, think and act in similar manners' (Foucault 1991, pp. 177–184, cited in Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014).

Biopower is carried out on the body and 'is concerned with matters of life and death, with birth and propagation, with health and illness, both physical and mental, and … the optimization of the life of a population' (Dean 2010, p. 119 cited in Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 110). It employs techniques used to shape, organise and categorise individuals and

populations simultaneously by 'imposing a law of truth' (Foucault, 1982, p. 781); such techniques are deployed by the state, schools, family, and private bodies (such as benefactors or philanthropists) or public bodies (such as the police) (Foucault, 1982). According to Rabinow and Rose (2006, cited in Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014), biopower is three-folded, composed of science (truth discourses), politics (specific strategies for intervention), and movements (p. 119). It relies upon the production and dissemination of techniques and expertise that spread across the whole society. Biopower is defined by Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) as the 'nurturing power' (p. 112). The authors provide the image of a farmer or a gardener caring for their crop through a set of techniques destined to increase yield towards achieving a productive exploitation. In this metaphor, the population is considered the social group that requires cautious and constant input from the institutions that regulate social life. Biopower rules all aspects of social and individual life, from the most intimate and domestic to the most public issues.

Sovereign power is aimed at commanding, enforcing or deterring certain behaviours or beliefs through the use of 'legislative, prohibitive and censoring' regulations (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 110); it relies on (ceremonial, public and spectacular) rules, laws and punishments to be enacted (Foucault, 1978). Sovereign power focuses on harbouring adhesion and allegiance from the population, thereby obtaining obedience and hindering resistance. It uses violence, control, biopower techniques and disciplinary action to meet its end.

All three power forms (disciplinary/capillary, biopower and sovereign) are intrinsically connected, and shape social life. These forms of power rely on discourses, knowledge and truths to be socially circulated and assimilated. I discuss these concepts in more detail in the following section.

3.2.1.3   Related concepts: Knowledge, truth and discourse

Foucault's theories of power transcend the analytical frameworks proposed in the previous sections of this chapter. He seeks to shine a spotlight on the *mechanics and techniques of*

power (Foucault, 2000, p. 176). As part of the mechanics and techniques, one can find discourse, knowledge and truth.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault argues that the relation between power and knowledge is one of co-production, meaning that knowledge produces power and power produces knowledge. This intrinsic connection, that he defines as power/knowledge, is not only one of co-production, but also one through which 'knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power' and power relations enable the 'rise to a possible corpus of knowledge' (Foucault, 1979, p. 29). Thus, the creation and development of knowledge corpuses depend on the exercise of power (such as discipline) across a variety of institutions – his work on body/power revealing how educational and military facilities allowed for enhanced knowledge production for example. Here, knowledge is conceptualised simultaneously as a capacity, an ability and a skill (*knowing how to* perform, act, do something) and as the scientific claim that establishes scientific truths and belief sets (*knowing that* the sun is hot) (Nola, 1998).

Domains of knowledge are formed and shaped by power/knowledge: what can be/is to be known, the modalities of knowing, who can/should know, what counts as knowledge, are all determined by power relations (Foucault, 1979). Therefore, the analysis of knowledge should be concerned with its spatial circulation and dissemination and how it intersects with power relations, with a focus on the 'tactics and strategies [of power in relation to knowledge] deployed through implantations, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organisations of domains' (Foucault, 1980, p. 77). The circulation, dissemination, function of knowledge, and its connection to power (the geopolitics of power/knowledge), form what Foucault called the *régime du savoir* (Foucault, 1982, p. 781).

The idea of *régime* is applied again to the notion of truth, which is a central concern of Foucault's. He debunks the idea that truth is produced by asepticised and objective scientific knowledge; rather, he considers it to emanate from the 'victory of one adversary over the other' (Foucault, 1979, p. 41), producing and reinforcing power relations. As such, truth is a construct and a result of social struggle, 'a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements' (Foucault, 1980, p. 133). The *régime of truth* symbolises the extent to which truth is connected in a circular fashion to the systems and effects of power and power/knowledge. The notion of *régime* – both in

relation to knowledge and truth – highlights the systemic dimension of power, its omnipotence in all social affairs and relations, and the dynamic and productive relations that it entertains.

Truth and knowledge simultaneously produce, are produced by, and rely on discourses to be disseminated. Discourses are a system of knowledge and meaning production, and the ways in which these knowledges are circulated to reinforce power, whilst legitimating truths, beliefs and behaviours (Foucault, 1980). Connected to social practices and power relations, they are 'sites of social relations of power because they situate ordinary practices of life and define the social fields of action that are imaginable and possible' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, pp. 55–56). Discourses are composed of sets of statements which organise meaning, pursue adherence and structure knowledge circulation. They instil facts and truths as valid or invalid through institutional processes of exclusion and inclusion (what is deemed truth or knowledge and what is not) (Mills, 2003). These can take on a number of forms, for example 'the programme of an institution, […] a means of justifying or masking a practice […], a secondary re-interpretation of this practice' (Foucault, 1980, pp. 194–195). As a system, discourse exceeds language as together with social practices and power relations they form how (and what) we comprehend; (as) objects, issues, actions. It constructs and produces social realities and truths, and overall, constitutes an epistemological and ontological paradigm that defines the human condition.

As the following quote illustrates, for Foucault there is a deep-seated connection between truth, knowledge, power and discourse:

'[Truth] induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true'.

(Foucault, 1980, p. 131)

Throughout his works, Foucault is concerned with historical ontologies (Crowley, 2009) and the discursive, historical and institutional construction of regimes of truths, knowledge and power. He developed analytical and methodological frameworks to explore social issues and power relations. I present these in the next section.

3.2.2   Analysing power following Foucault

Foucault contests theoretical formation, claiming that theories should be instruments[34] rather than systems used to untangle power relations and the struggles in which they are embedded, and should be grounded in reflexive and historical analysis (Foucault, 1980, p. 145). Foucault's works have focused on developing frameworks that can be applied for the analysis of social issues (Garland, 2014), the conditions of their construction, and the means through which these emerged and were legitimated or silenced (Gale, 2001).

3.2.2.1   Archaeology and genealogy

Foucault drew on historical analyses of archaeology and genealogy as methodologies or methods to examine relations between knowledge, power and discourse. The methods he developed are part of his attempt to develop 'histories of the present', that is, a critical engagement with the conditions and constructions of knowledge, power and discourse that have contributed to the emergence and perpetuation of social issues. Thereby, he focused on the systems and institutions that construct and consolidate discourses and diffuse them, enabling them to become socially accepted and internalised realities and truths.

Archaeology is a method used to explore the structural conditions that have produced historical periods (epochs), the discourses and tropes around which these are organised, and the means through which these are articulated and diffused. According to Gale (2001)

---

[34] Foucault (1980) argues in favour of 'the notion of theory as toolkit', where theory stands for 'a *logic* of the specificity of power relations and the struggles around them' (p. 145, italics in original text).

'[archaeology seeks] to uncover [...] not so much who speaks but what is spoken, what positions it is spoken from, and how this is mediated by the speaking positions of others' (p. 389). Foucault's focus therefore lies on analysing the role that discourses have in legitimating social issues (Crowley, 2009) and the contextual and historical systems of relations (apparatus), or the 'regulatory ensemble' which enforce a sense of collective truth, rationality and knowledge (Al-Amoudi, 2007; Crowley, 2009; Garland, 2014). Archaeology is not interested in the status of the speaker[35]: the focus lies on the *statements* (*énoncé*) rather than the words (and their subjective meaning) and how they are diffused through discourse. The archaeological analysis caters to ethnographic research, interested in power issues that permeate social problems; governing systems; the political, social and cultural realms; knowledge dispersion and internalisation; and processes of social relations (Alvesson and Deetz, 2011a).

Genealogy is concerned with 'the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc.' (Foucault, 1980, pp. 117–118). It investigates the formation and circulation of discourse within the time of its emergence (Alvesson and Deetz, 2011a) and how these impact the present (Garland, 2014). Foucault seeks to develop a 'history of the present' articulated around a historical analysis of events – notably 'specific struggles, conflicts, alliances, and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten' (Garland, 2014, p. 372), in order to develop better understandings of the construction and circulation of discourse and knowledge as truth, and how these notions of truth have yielded domination and power (Mills, 2003). Foucault developed genealogy as a historical analytical method to examine who strategises power, who fashions it, who performs it, who distributes it, who controls it; in essence, *whom it serves* (Foucault, 2000).

A genealogical stance considers that 'conceptions of truth and knowledge are fundamentally products of power' (Crowley, 2009, p. 341), as power shapes discourses, which in turn normalise and legitimise social issues at a given time, within a given context, and establish what is knowledge. According to Garland (2014), the methodology of a genealogical analysis comprises of two specific steps: the diagnosis of a social issue (including the identification of the apparatus in place that supports the normalisation of given social issue); followed by

---

[35] Or as expressed by Gale (2001), 'interest [lies not] in authorship but in vocality' (p. 389).

the problematisation that involves the understanding of how an issue became problematic for a certain group at a certain period in time.

Archaeology and genealogy are closely related in that they both seek to uncover the conditions of knowledge as power through discourse – archaeology through a focus on contextual and historical discourse and the apparatus that enforces it, and genealogy through the processes and structures that affect contemporary circulation of power (Gale, 2001; Mills, 2003; Crowley, 2009; Garland, 2014). Foucault and other scholars have focused on developing methods and analytic approaches to examine the power/knowledge nexus as productive of resistance, as I discuss below.

3.2.2.2   Exercise of power and resistance to power

Foucault (1982) states that 'for power relations we had no tools of study. We had recourse only to ways of thinking about power based on legal models, that is: What legitimates power? Or, we had recourse to ways of thinking about power based on institutional models, that is: What is the state?' In *The Subject and Power* (1982), Foucault offers some avenues to examine power relations methodologically as he endeavours to address the following question: 'by what means is [power] exercised?' (p. 786) in relations between individuals and groups. He is concerned with the overlap between capacity-communication-power (capacity here can be understood as techniques, activities or processes), and their productive nature.

As power relies on techniques (capacities) and means of communication to be operationalised, Foucault proposes to concentrate on the actions undertaken towards this operationalisation, or 'the possibility of action upon the action of others (which is coextensive with every social relationship)' (p. 793), to analyse power relations, through five key steps (p. 792):

1. *Examination of the system of differentiations, that is: the economic, political, judicial, linguistic, cultural, knowledge-related systems that determine societal differentiation*

2. *Definition of the types of objectives pursued and how they inform actions (status, privileges, authority)*

3. *Identification of the means of bringing power relations into being, or the concrete actions taken to exercise power (threat, violence, discourse, control, surveillance, rules, technologies) and their formality/informality*

4. *Exploration of the forms of institutionalisation, be these partial (i.e. schools) or universal (i.e. state), formal (i.e. legal structures) or informal*

5. *Analysis of the degree of rationalisation, that is: the 'effectiveness of the instruments and the certainty of the results' in relation to the actions implemented to bring into play the power relations, or in other words: how are the processes actioning the exercise of power adjusted to the situation at hand?*

Foucault's work on power outlined clear connections between power and resistances (Foucault, 1980, 1982), as '[resistances] are formed right at the point where power relations are exercised' (Foucault, 1980, p. 142). In their work on multiform resistance strategies and practices, Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) sought to identify what forms of resistance were produced in relation to different forms of power (disciplinary/capillary, sovereign and biopower). Sovereign power, which manifests through violence, repression, punishment, force and pain, is met either with public disobedient and peaceful action and/or violent displays such as 'rebellions, strikes, boycotts, disobedience and political revolutions' (p. 113) to counteract authority and domination. Other subversive actions (desertion, resistance) contribute to undermining the sovereign power.

On the other hand, disciplinary power employs rewards and adherence to legitimise the notions of performance and effectiveness as social progress. Adherence ensures social participation and conformity to the idea of a global social project – thus, resistance to disciplinary power will encourage non-participation, contestation of harmonious and ubiquitous discourse, re-appropriation of dominant discourse towards new ends, or even mimicry which 'becomes a strategy to disturb the constructed differences on which authority is based' (p. 115). Foucault also argued in favour of self-reflexivity and self-examination as a technique to detract from disciplinary power: in becoming self-aware of

issues relating to subjectivities, privilege, personal and social constructs of status, and to experiences, individuals can resist regimes of truth that shape their social beings. Thus, resistance to disciplinary power is to be practised at both the social/institutional and individual levels (behaviour and body).

Finally, biopower is concerned with the 'regulation of social life, social engineering, management or governmentality in which health, longevity, energy or vitality, stability and growth of social life is in focus' (p. 118). Resistance to biopower thus depends on counter production and dissemination of techniques that contest the dominant discourses, politics and movements, and can be articulated as: free knowledge sharing, undermining profit/property-based corporate ventures, sabotaging engineering or management techniques, private data and information release.

The exercise of disciplinary power is particularly relevant to this research: it applies directly to the development sector and DPs, enacted by the state, the private sector and civil society actors. Although genealogy and archaeological methods deployed by Foucault have been drawn upon in a wide range of studies, it is the analysis of resistance strategies and practices, and how these are absorbed back into the dominant model development discourse – thereby instigating or nourishing new power relations – that I argue can offer insightful theoretical and empirical evidence relevant to my research questions on asymmetries within DPs and on power issues in global strategies and relations. I provide an analysis of resistances in Chapter 7.

In the preceding section, I outlined a selection of analytical frameworks developed to address power relations practically and empirically. Starting with the dimensional conceptualisations of power in section 3.1, I moved to Foucault's views on the productive and positive nature of power, and how he approached power not as a possession, but as a relational modality of social interactions, stating that 'power is everywhere'. The methodological approaches that he developed for his historical analyses of power, namely archaeology and genealogy, were designed to examine relations between knowledge, power and discourse. Similarly, the different forms of power (capillary, sovereign, biopower) allowed one to explore the ways in which power is exercised and the techniques used to enforce regimes of truth. Introducing the notion of resistance produced concomitantly to power highlighted the interconnectedness of strategies and practices to address and

mitigate power asymmetries. This is a fundamental theoretical connection that I draw upon in Chapter 7 when I identify and analyse the responses of development stakeholders to power in DPs.

As seen in the previous two sections, power is a complex notion: a 'contested concept'[36] according to Lukes (2015), a boundary object, supporting conflicting epistemological and ontological underpinnings. Throughout the following section, I discuss attempts to reconcile these positions through multi-prismatic analytical frameworks. I start with introducing Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy of power in international relations followed by Gaventa's Power Cube. These frameworks hint at the opportunities in designing a cross-analysis to examine the empirical materials throughout the subsequent chapters.

3.3   Intersecting power analysis for development

3.3.1   Overlapping power analysis applied to development

3.3.1.1   Analysing international relations: a taxonomy of power

Barnett and Duvall (2005) drew from Foucault's and Digeser's (1992) power conceptualisations to design a taxonomy of power applied to international relations. Recognising how power has long been approached only as a dimensional 'power over' issue, they argue for a framework that combines a variety of prisms (Dahl's relational characteristic of a dimensional possessive conceptualisation and Foucault's systemic power/knowledge and discourse conceptualisation) and processes of power, to better reflect the complexity and interactional forms of power at play in international relations. To that end, they devised

---

[36] Haugaard (2010) contends that the 'essential contestedness of power' is due to a 'normative debate concerning moral right and wrong' (p. 422) rather than the result of subjective or empirical observations. He expands this argument to the notions of democracy, art, culture.

the following taxonomy designed to address how social relations enable or constrain social individuals (this could also be applied to the organisational level):

	Relational specificity	
	Direct	Diffuse
Interactions of specific actors	Compulsory	Institutional
Social relations of constitution	Structural	Productive

Figure 3: Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power

Through this taxonomy, they seek to reconcile the 'power over' and 'power to' conceptualisations[37]. Here, 'power over' emanates from 'social relations of interaction' through which actors exercise control over the behaviour and beliefs of others; 'power to' refers to 'social relations of constitution', with social relations defining and shaping the identity of actors and their practices (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 46).

Compulsory power equates to the 'direct control over another' with regard to existence or actions (Dahl's conceptualisation); it can be enacted through material, symbolic and normative resources. Institutional power refers to the 'indirect control over socially distant others', through rules, procedures, discourses. According to the authors, institutional power refers to the 'control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse relations of interaction' (p. 43); this form of power relies on influencing the agenda setting, and the emergence or silencing of social issues, recalling Bachrach and Baratz's work. Structural power is concerned with 'direct and mutual constitution of the capacity of actors', inspired by Lukes, operating overtly and covertly, to manipulate, shape and obliterate actions, values

---

[37] This has been further developed by Gaventa (2006) (see section 3.3.1.2) to incorporate two more power features known as 'power with' and 'power within'.

and interpretations of reality whilst generating privilege, roles, identities and interests (p. 54). Finally, productive power is intrinsically Foucauldian inasmuch as it relates to diffuse systemic social processes which create 'systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope' circulating through networks. The productive power creates otherness, classification, normalisation, and conceptually ascribes and 'stabilise[s] meaning that constrains policy' (p. 56).

Empirically, Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy has been drawn upon by Elbers and Schulpen (2013) in their study of North-South NGO partnerships. Analysing institutional power in the context of geographically (spatially) distant organisations, they seek to uncover the organisational and partnerial arrangements such as rules which reinforce power imbalances between DPs. Rules can be all at once enabling or constraining, conditioning or facilitating of behaviours and actions. The authors are interested in the types of rules and their effects over time. They find that rules are multifaceted as they guide and shape project design and implementation, capacity building and accountability.

Findings show that power asymmetries within DPs are 'institutionalised in the rules governing the relationship' (Elbers and Schulpen, 2013, p. 64). Thus, rules are the sites and processes that legitimate and cement the dominance of Northern organisations over their Southern partners; through these rules being institutionalised, they are diffused throughout the relationship, reflecting the value sets of the Northern organisations to the detriment of their Southern counterpart. Elbers and Schulpen (2013) demonstrate how unilateral, structured, formal and to some extent hidden rules are no warrant for equal relations, but rather that they are instruments for the exercise of power.

The authors suggest that DP relations could be improved by allowing institutional redesign through modifying/developing rules collaboratively, focusing on alignment of values and practices within their rules and reviewing an entire rule set rather than only one, as these are all 'overlapping, intertwined and mutually reinforcing' (p. 65).

Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy proves interesting in combining two facets of power previously separated: power over and power to. In the following section, I introduce Gaventa who, through his Power Cube, extends this conceptualisation to bring four power facets together.

3.3.1.2 Examining civic participation: the Power Cube

Various authors have attempted to reconcile different power theories[38], outlining the resemblances between contrasting power theories. One of these theorists/practitioners is Gaventa. Strongly influenced by Lukes, Gaventa devised the Power Cube, an analytical framework that seeks to compose with multiple manifestations of power (Gaventa, 2006). His power cube brings together Lukes' three dimensions of power that he interprets as *forms* (visible, hidden, invisible) and *spaces* (invited, claimed and closed) combined with a spatial component that he describes as *levels* (local, national, global). The Power Cube endeavours to approach power as productive and positive (inspired by works from Foucault). He thereby seeks to combine an intertwined analysis of civic participation and power in development, to reveal the sites, spaces and strategies that promote participation.

The power cube aims to support a juxtaposition of power frameworks, thus offering the possibility to approach the concept not only through the *power over* prism, but to include also *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. Power *over* is the dimensional perspective that I have discussed throughout this chapter, found notably in Dahl, Bacharch and Baratz, and to some extent Lukes. Power *to* is the call and capacity for action 'to exercise agency and to realise the potential of rights, citizenship or voice' (p. 24), and included in Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power described in the previous section. Power *within* refers to the journey an individual undertakes to consolidate self-understanding. Finally, power *with* symbolises 'the synergy which can emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others, or through processes of collective action and alliance building' (p. 24). These conceptualisations of power embrace a potentialist approach to the opportunities of social and self-transformation and change and were initially proposed by developmental theorists such as Sen (1999) with the capabilities notion.

---

[38] For example, Haugaard (2003, 2010) attempted a metatheory of power by developing a typology reconciling seven distinct categories of power creation: *episodic power, dispositional power, systemic power, power to, power over, empowerment, legitimate power* and *domination*.

LEVELS

Global

National

Local

Closed
Invited
Claimed/
Created

FORMS

Invisible
Hidden
Visible

Visible

SPACES
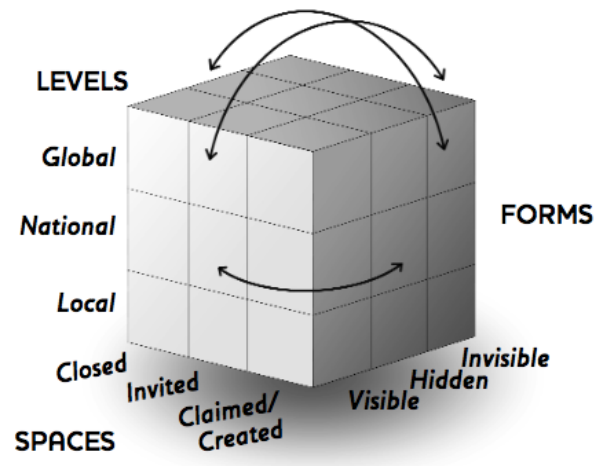
Figure 4: Gaventa's power cube (2006)

Gaventa's work has enhanced the 'simplified binary and trinary metaphors [of power]' (McGee, 2016, p. 106) by drawing on previous works recognising the positive forms of power, and by proposing an interactive and intersecting power analysis focusing on participation, civic action and empowerment.

With this cube, Gaventa (2006) proposes to move beyond the vertical power over analysis and instead, ensure that power is tackled in multiple ways, spaces, relations and forms to achieve social change, as 'an ensemble of strategies, which work together and not against each other, is required to fully challenge these sets of power relationships' (p. 30). This enables consideration of the 'relationality of power' (Pantazidou, 2012, p. 11) which permits the possibility that individuals may be powerful in some relations and/or spaces and powerless in others, thus overthrowing the static and stable conceptualisation of power in other dimensional frameworks discussed previously. According to Pantazidou (2012), the cube does not solely focus on individuals, but also on the 'networks of hidden forces that define the way things work behind the scenes' (p. 12), thus acknowledging the role of influencing institutions and groups in conveying or hindering information.

The power cube is relevant to organisational and development studies, as it recognises that power operates at different levels, throughout different spaces and dimensions. As Gaventa (2006) explains: 'the dynamics of power depend on the type of space in which it is found,

the level at which it operates and the form it takes' (p. 30). It is specifically suited to analysing power in the development field and a tool designed for development stakeholders, used to self-reflect on power practices at agency level, power strategies within governance reforms and with development activists to develop interventions that would promote participation and citizen education on social issues (Gaventa, 2006). Its focus on participation and power seeks to uncover the relational and spatial modalities of power, focusing on notions such as inclusion/exclusion, invitation, accessibility, and representation, and thus appears particularly interesting in the case of an inter-organisational study.

The power cube has been used by scholars and practitioners to approach power theoretically and empirically in a more complex and interrelated manner. Despite not having found an application of Gaventa's power cube for the analysis of power relations within DPs, other empirical studies have shown how the cube can reveal interesting power relations which could inspire a DP analysis. For example, Lay Lee (2012) applies the power cube in a historical study of the waves of NGO development in China, showing how these waves correlate with army and state power, and shifts in national governance systems. The author suggests that with the governance change towards democracy and a turn towards human rights advocacy, the Party-state considered the use of visible and hidden power at different levels as a means to control the impact and success of the NGOs' activities and relations. In turn, NGOs designed innovative spaces for advocacy and civic participation as a strategy. With the advent of novel social and environmental issues, NGOs found themselves better prepared and linked, and thus took on a more preponderant role in new spaces from which the Party-state found itself excluded.

Whilst Lay Lee (2012) focuses on the spaces and levels of power, Crawford and Andreassen (2013) utilise the power cube to uncover the connections between human rights struggles, poverty and power dominant structures and relations. In their edited volume proposing a comparative analysis of human rights struggles in four African countries, the authors contend that rights struggles ('a political process, not a technical or legal one' (p. 5)) can only be challenged if power inequalities are simultaneously addressed and tackled. In focusing on 'shift[ing] the distribution of power in society in favour of relatively poor and marginalized groups' (p. 5), the power cube is used in a dynamic manner to contemplate how non-governmental rights groups have sought to overcome power inequalities at different levels,

and how these groups have contributed to transforming power structures and spaces, benefitting poor and marginalised groups.

Applying the power cube in the context of Zimbabwe, Hellum *et al.* (2013) examine how human rights NGOs navigate different spaces, notably the actions and strategies used in modifying exclusionary spaces and relations and the manipulation of spaces to control civil society by employing hidden and visible power in an effort to detract human rights. Throughout the case studies put forward in the Zimbabwean context, the authors examine the spectrum of participation that is played out and the processes that have led the organisations to build counter-power at individual and organisational levels. They find that partnerships and collaborations between organisations operating across different spaces could alleviate the challenges experienced by those actively trying to change closed spaces. This is an interesting finding inasmuch as it offers some insights on strategic partnerships towards social change.

Shortcomings of the power cube are picked up by Crawford and Andreassen (2013), for example that the levels omit the household which is detrimental to accounting for all relationality of power in domestic and intimate settings (notably an important level in gender studies, and intersecting power/economic/gender analysis). As an analytic tool, it is specifically geared towards empirical examinations of power manifestations, structures and relations (practical, economic, political, social) but not directly adequate in the production of theories. As such, it would require to be combined with other power analytical frameworks or theories. McGee (2016) raises the issues of such a framework being used as a checklist or a simplistic tool throughout which a power analysis is 'all too readily understood as widgets' (p. 106). Problematising, contextualising and conceptualising power are all essential exercises in its analysis, she argues, and this ought to be done using political and sociological power theories to adequately represent its complexity.

Both the frameworks I introduced in this section were designed in an effort to reconcile different conceptualisations of power (combining Foucault's and dimensional perspectives on power). They have been used to address and examine specific issues in development – ranging human rights, the institutionalisation of DPs, the development of NGOs – which elude more traditional examinations of power when conceptualised solely as 'power over'. Barnett and Duvall's and Gaventa's frameworks clearly outline the different ways in which

power and resistances are interconnected, and specifically in the application of Gaventa's power cube, how power can indeed be approached as positive and productive.

3.3.2   Reviewing power in DPs

The issue of power in DPs has been vastly researched throughout past decades. In Chapter 2, I reveal the tensions between the conceptualisation of partnerships as equal relationships between different partners and the unequal power practices and relations that characterise them. How these tensions are consolidated or negotiated is also the space in which power operates. Foucault insists on the importance of power analysis because '[a] society without power relations can only be an abstraction. Which, be it said in passing, makes the analysis of power relations in a given society, their historical formation, the source of their strength or fragility, the conditions which are necessary to transform some or to abolish others' (Foucault, 1982, p. 791) all the more politically necessary. However, one of the criticisms made of Foucault is that if 'power is everywhere', then possibly power is nowhere (Baudrillard, 1977)[39]. Whilst I do not abide by this provoking affirmation, I do acknowledge the importance of specifying what power constitutes within the framework of this research and to outline how I am to engage critically with it if it is everywhere or nowhere – this is done throughout the findings' analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

A rapid overview of my research questions will shed light on the reasons why I have chosen to use several power analysis frameworks for the empirical analyses in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (this will be presented and discussed in the next chapter on Methodology and the findings chapters):

---

[39] Baudrillard (1977) makes the case that Foucault only discusses power 'coupled with' (p. 63-64) – seduction, desire, the body, sexuality, etc. He argues that power is granted 'a second existence' because of these associations, but that as a singular component, it is already dead and 'can no longer be found anywhere'.

RQ1: *How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of international development?*

RQ2: *How are power asymmetries produced in the development sector, and how do these influence the modalities, relations and practices of DPs?*

RQ3: *How do development stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?*

RQ1 is concerned with the conceptualisations and enactments of DPs, that is: the alignment or lack thereof between partnerial value sets and practices, and how these might be informed by power relations that produce inequalities and asymmetries. This was picked up in Elbers and Schulpen's study (2013) as a crucial point of contention within DPs, and constitutive of a vast part of the empirical evidence, as discussed in the findings chapters.

RQ2 deals with the modalities and practices of the DPs (approached simultaneously as an entity and a composite of different organisations) to counter asymmetrical power relations, instigated by the development system or its actors. Here, I am interested in power relations and practices produced between different development protagonists, and the ways in which these bear effects on the DPs.

Finally, RQ3 lays out the locus or the practices that enable sustainability of DPs, and how the challenges confronted by DPs are also the conditions that favour dynamic reconfiguration and flexible adjustment. Here I draw from Foucault's genealogical *who does power serve?* interrogation, and Gaventa's power within, power with and power to[40], as opportunities for learning from the organisational experiences towards instigating change. I do so in examining how the power relations produce organisational and individual strategies and resistances that might interfere with specific relations, discourses, or the development model as a whole.

Reflected throughout these questions, I am concerned with exploring relations, practices, values, discourses, spaces and sites as either *enabling* or *constraining* power within DPs (see Follett as discussed in Boje and Rosile, 2001; Barnett and Duvall, 2005). Therefore, I rely on a multidimensional power analysis that is concerned with the development system as

---

[40] In Haugaard (2003), power to is introduced as *empowerment*.

productive of power relations; with the DP and its organisations as sites of power production, circulation and integration; and the experiences of individuals who are subjects of power and enablers of resistance.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a number of theoretical debates on power, focusing on the dimensional and systemic approaches. I have shown how power has been and remains an evolving concept, deeply embedded in opposing philosophical positionings. Dimensional power theories have focused on interactional negative power through a focus on repression, domination and coercion. I examined how Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes' approaches to power built on Dahl's one-dimensional conceptualisation, and their empirical application.

Foucault's power (as continuous, multidimensional, omnipresent and dynamically circulating) instigated a shift towards meta-analyses of discourses, *régimes* and models which produce power relations. His take on power as productive has challenged the negative perception found in the dimensional conceptualisation of power, highlighting strategies, action, exercise and resistance as possible practices to address power. His work has also benefited critical movements and theories (feminist, postcolonial, post-development) which have sought to contest dominant and power-infused social relations (I discuss some of these in the previous chapter).

As shown throughout the chapter, different approaches to power carry different outcomes. The dimensional conceptualisations introduced in section 3.1 focus on 'power over', and overlook the margins of manoeuvre or the strategies developed by those considered 'powerless' in their relation to those considered 'powerful'. Foucault's conceptualisation of the power/resistance co-production offers a way to mitigate the limitations of the dimensional approaches. However, his forms of power (capillary, sovereign and biopower) can only inform on some features of international development relations and practices.

In order to debunk classification or the tendency to promote one theoretical approach over another, scholars have attempted to reconcile opposing approaches to power. Their work

discussed here demonstrate the benefit in applying 'overlapping and intersecting' analytical frameworks to empirical settings. McGee's (2016) following quote explicitly outlines the opportunities of embracing a multifaceted power analysis for this study:

A power analysis 'consists of applying a set of overlapping and interacting analytical lenses to help one to understand that power is at play and categorise it – in terms of expressions (over, to, with, within), realms (public, private, intimate), levels (household, local, national, transnational, global), forms or faces (visible, hidden, invisible), as well as dimensions such as agency and structure, intention and consciousness'.

(Mcgee, 2016, p. 104).

The frameworks developed by Barnett and Duvall, and Gaventa, contribute to the analysis of DP relations and practices insomuch that they make explicit issues relating simultaneously to 'power over' (control, manipulation, threats, agenda-setting etc.) and to the strategies and resistances displayed to mitigate power asymmetries, considered positive and productive. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are designed around bringing together these different approaches to better illustrate the interconnectedness and overlapping features of power.

The next chapter looks at the methodology, the methods and the ethics principles that have guided this study. I outline the centrality of the critical participatory action research (CPAR) throughout the entirety of the project and the thesis write-up.

CHAPTER 4:   METHODOLOGY, METHODS & ETHICS

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the methodological underpinnings of the research.

This chapter is organised in three sections: firstly, I introduce the philosophical foundations – including the epistemological and ontological prisms – that I embrace for this study. I also discuss how the initial research proposal was amended over the course of the project to reflect participants' and sectoral concerns. I follow by outlining the methodological approach that was developed conjointly with the partner organisations, namely critical participatory action research (CPAR), and the principles that informed the enactment of the project and the analysis of the empirical materials.

The second section focuses on the mixed-methods that were designed for this research and the empirical materials that emerged over the course of the 3-year project. I discuss the co-production, coding and analysis of the multiple data, and outline how the thematic interpretive analysis supported me in meaning-making of complex, nuanced and broad data.

Finally, in the third section, I debate the ethical quandaries of participatory research, and how I addressed these by drawing simultaneously from institutional ethics and a bespoke *ethical continuum* developed for this research.

4.1 Research approach

4.1.1 Philosophical underpinnings

This qualitative project was designed as a co-operative inquiry, that is: research developed with people, in which participants are co-researchers and partake fully in the production of empirical materials (Heron and Reason, 2008). A co-operative inquiry supposes a pluralist perspective in terms of philosophical and methodological underpinnings. Throughout this section, I review the epistemological and ontological paradigms drawn upon throughout the study.

4.1.1.1 Epistemological and ontological considerations

Epistemology is 'a theory of knowledge' (Harding, 1987, p. 3), the philosophical stance that questions what we consider knowledge and evidence (Mason, 2002). It plays a crucial role in the design, operationalisation and application of research, as it determines 'how knowledge can be demonstrated' (Mason, 2002, p. 16): it informs the approach, methodology and methods that will contribute to developing the research scope and argument. Epistemology is interested in:

✓ *What type(s) of knowledge(s) are considered?*

✓ *What are the processes towards achieving said knowledge(s)?*

✓ *What is left out as non-knowledge(s)?*

✓ *What are the effects of research on knowledge(s) and of knowledge(s) on research?*

It identifies the 'knower' (who knows or who can know) and defines 'knowledge' (what is knowledge, how does knowledge become, what knowledge does). In the context of

organisational and development research, the questions around knowledge holders, knowledge makers, knowledge realms, knowledge sharing and knowledge as power appear fundamental, as they intersect with the aforementioned issues of legitimacy, power and injustice.

Heron and Reason's (2008) *extended epistemology* reconciles these questions. The authors consider four ways of knowing as: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. I outline these in more detail in the following table:

Knowing Type	Definition	Product
Experiential	being present with, by direct face-to-face encounter with a person, place or thing; knowing through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy & resonance	the quality of the relationship in which the knowing participates, including the quality of being of those in the relationship
Presentational	emerges from the encounters of experiential knowing, by intuiting significant form and process in that which is met	through the expressive imagery of movement, dance, sound, music, drawing, painting, sculpture, poetry, story and drama
Propositional	'about' something is intellectual knowing of ideas and theories	the informative spoken or written statement
Practical	knowing how to do something	a skill, knack or competence – interpersonal, manual, political, technical, transpersonal, and more – supported by a community of practice

Table 4: Heron and Reason's (2008) extended epistemology

Research underpinned by an extended epistemology prioritises collaborative modus operandi throughout the entirety of the process. It is particularly relevant in the case of participatory research, and it is linked to a transformative and radical paradigm that connects collaborative action to political participation (Howell, 2013). It invites 'critical subjectivity of the self' (p. 8) as a practice and a philosophy. An extended epistemology draws from ways of knowing, being, interacting and experiencing the world and others (Heron and Reason, 2008, p. 366). Using an extended epistemology tallies with knowledge as a situated, subjective and lived component of social life.

Theoretical pluralism allows one to 'open' and 'widen' the scope of epistemology (Spivak, 1983; Freire, 1998, 2005a; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Therefore, combined with the extended epistemology, feminist, Indigenous and Southern theories have been instrumental in the epistemological articulation of the research. These are concerned with issues of class, race, socio-economic status, knowledge circulation and research as a critical practice for social justice (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Outhwaite, 2015). Feminist scholars (e.g. Harding, 1987; Crenshaw, 1994; Lorde, 2017) recognise the differentiated impacts of inequalities and privilege, as well as how gender and associated stereotypes, norms and behaviours limit access and opportunities in a patriarchal and androcentric world. Indigenous epistemologies approach knowledge as embodied, remembered, expressed and experienced in times, spaces and realms that are not confined (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Elements such as: the relations that will be developed with participants and settings; the iterative nature of research processes; researcher and researched positionalities; the importance of inter- and transdisciplinarity in the generation of knowledge; and the application of knowledge to real-world problems; are central in Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies.

Within the realms of this work, I frame my epistemological positioning as:

✓ *inclusionary – knowledges & knowers are an intrinsic part of the research process*

✓ *endorsing – all knowledges & all knowers are appreciated for their situated positioning*

✓ *decolonial – the normative, Western-based & liberal narratives of knowledge are to be questioned & challenged*

✓ *emancipatory – knowledge is power, thus it is to be shared, disseminated, participatory & experimental*

✓ *processorial – knowledges are co-created, co-produced, co-negotiated in interrelational modalities & dynamics*

✓ *evolving – knowledges are fluid, flexible & permeable to the world & its inhabitants*

The epistemological stance introduced above was combined with phenomenology. Phenomenology is concerned with representing experiences from the point of view of the participants (Lester, 1999). It focuses on the place of consciousness, subjectivity, self,

hermeneutics and meaning-making processes (Gill and Johnson, 2002; Fawcett and Hearn, 2004; Bryman, 2012). It is aligned with an extended epistemology as it is concerned with the researcher's position and preconceived worldviews, and how these might influence their way of making sense and being in the world; and combined with an interpretive stance, phenomenology can 'inform, support or challenge policy and action' (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Throughout the course of the research, phenomenology provided a means to consider both the researcher's and the participants' positionality in the process of meaning-making, whilst simultaneously examining the relational dynamics of the research. It supported me throughout the organisational immersion and fieldwork, offering a framework that I could utilise to reflexively examine issues of selfhood and interactions as they arose. This was especially relevant in the exercise of autoethnographic and reflexive journaling (discussed in 9.1.2), and whilst writing the interview markings (these are explained in section 4.2.1.3, and consist of an interview log + interview reflexive experience), when I found myself entangled in questions about my role and place in the research and within the interactions with participants (during the observation, authentic participation and interviews).

Ontology refers to how reality is perceived (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012), and is concerned with 'the nature and essence of social things' (Mason, 2002, p. 14). My ontological underpinnings for this thesis are concerned with *people as social actors who bear situated interpretations and understandings of their contexts.* The research invited a co-investigation of how reality, practices, beliefs and interactions are shaped, understood, experienced, and navigated – in relation to DPs in ID, and to the larger development model. I drew from a plurality of ontological perspectives. The constructivist ontology acknowledges the continuous creation and review of social phenomena and their meanings by the social actors (Bryman, 2012, p. 33) and is concerned with relationships rather than the individual (Gergen and Gergen, 2008, p. 166). Adopting a constructivist ontology concentrates on social phenomena as inherently dynamic, iterative and flexible.

However, I was also concerned with recognising that my ontological positionings might contrast with the participants' ontologies. According to Querejazu (2016), some faiths and philosophies embrace a relational ontology for which 'it is the connections between the social and nature, the divine and the factual that make sense' (p. 9). She advocates for the breakdown of ontological hegemony and hierarchies, towards a cohabitation of ontological

perspectives. Given the preponderant role of Nepal as site of knowledge production, organisational immersion, and co-researcher interaction, I was intent in reconciling these considerations through ontological pluralism. Ontological pluralism is also required for methodological pluralism (Midgley, 2011; Midgley, Nicholson and Brennan, 2017).

Research proposal review

These philosophical and theoretical underpinnings supported me in the reframing of the initial research proposition as written in the study proposal submitted to secure the funding for this PGR award. The title of that proposal – *Strengthening civil society: linking policy, practice and theory to improve inter-organisational partnerships in international development* – makes five initial problematic assumptions. Drawing from Chapter 2, these can be articulated as follows: firstly, the injunction to 'strengthen civil society' is embedded in a neoliberal and modernist paradigm that promotes civil society as a homogenous entity that requires strengthening to overcome societal and political issues; secondly, that it requires strengthening because of its seemingly weak state; thirdly, that inter-organisational partnerships for international development are a homogeneous generic entity, very much the same as the 'civil society'; fourthly, that they need improving; finally, that there is a direct link between organisational partnerships improvement and civil society strengthening.

Another reading of this title suggests that in order to remedy the failing civil society, suffices to rectify the defunct organisational partnerships in ID. As it stands, the title establishes causal relations between a successful civil society and performing ID partnerships. Omitted here are the institutional, structural and systemic strains and challenges. To reflect the philosophy, the methodology (CPAR) and project (collaborative and multi-sited), the title was changed to (Kara, 2018, pp. 72–73):

Partnerships, power & privilege: A critical investigation of development partnerships

between UK & Nepal civil society organisations.

The RQs as originally designed for the collaborative bid also required amendments as they were articulated in a functionalist and deductive way ('what' and 'which' suggesting pre-made assumptions). The revised RQs (see the table on next page) are refocused on the inclusive singularities and attributes of the partnership at hand. The specific amendments I made resulted from reflexive and critical discussions with participants over the course of the fieldwork, as well as using a problematisation approach. Problematisation seeks to 'critically scrutin[ise] and challeng[e] dominant assumptions in a field' through the 'examination of existing theory and studies within [that] field' (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013b, p. 25). Problematisation is an organic methodology (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013a) which enjoins reflexivity and criticality. I also applied problematisation to revise the thesis title (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013b).

RQ1: What are the main characteristics and key features of existing partnerships between Southern and Northern NGOs working in ID?	RQ2: What are the dimensions and features that generate 'effective' North/South transnational development partnerships and why?	RQ3: Which are the key steps that need to be undertaken to establish sustainable and effective North/South partnerships?
Assumptions:	Assumptions:	Assumptions:
There are universal characteristics and features of existing partnerships between Southern and Northern NGOs working in ID;	There are universal dimensions and features that generate 'effective' North/South transnational development partnerships;	There is a (universal) set of key steps that need to be undertaken to establish sustainable and effective DPs;
These characteristics and features can be extracted and described;	These dimensions and features can explain why these partnerships are effective or not effective;	Sustainability and effectiveness can be achieved simultaneously;
PUK and PN exhibit these characteristics and features;	Effectiveness is a (universal) criteria/quality that DPs should aspire for;	If these steps are not undertaken, DPs will not be sustainable and effective;
These features and characteristics don't need to be problematised;	Effective partnerships can be generated by some specific dimensions and features;	There is a causal relation between undertaking given steps and sustainability and effectiveness;
Partnerships are understood and conceptualised in a similar way for both organisations involved	Effectiveness should be sought after by both organisations of the partnership;	There is a universal model of sustainability and effectiveness for partnerships;
	Effectiveness is a status that is acquired, causal;	There is an assumption about the appropriateness of partnership as a mode of organisation/ collaboration in ID;
	Partnerships and effectiveness are concepts that are understood in a similar way for both organisations involved;	Sustainable and effective DPs are expected not to produce any power asymmetries;
	The partnership at hand shares a definition of effectiveness;	The differentiated roles of development stakeholders in producing new practices to mitigate power asymmetries is overlooked
	The partnership at hand holds these dimensions and features	
Revised RQ1: How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of ID?	Revised RQ2: How are power asymmetries produced in the development sector, and how do these influence DPs modalities, relations and practices?	Revised RQ3: How do development stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?

Table 5: Processes towards reframing the proposed research questions

Throughout the preceding section, I have provided a detailed account of the ways in which the philosophical underpinnings supported the amendment of the research title and RQs and which guided me throughout the study. I now discuss the chosen methodological approach drawn upon to inform the enactment of the research.

4.1.2 Developing the methodological approach[41]

Methodology is a 'theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed' (Harding, 1987, p. 2). It is a conceptual and practical bridge that reconciles philosophy, theory, methods and ethics. For Tuhiwai Smith (2012), '[m]ethodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses' (p. 144); in sorts, in turns research into a practicable endeavour.

4.1.2.1 Journeying through the AR spectrum

The collaborative bid referred to action-research (AR) as the methodological approach. AR links social research to social action, and aims to respond to identified social issues through the participation of communities of inquiry (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). AR departs from real-world issues and seeks to address them through the identification of tangible and practical solutions that can be implemented by the communities of inquiry involved in the study. It encourages 'an approach in which the action researcher and members of a social setting collaborate in the diagnosis of a problem and in the development of a solution based on the diagnosis' (Bryman, 2012, p. 397), although the practical enactments of AR are

---

[41] Excerpts from this section are drawn from a paper published for the *Myths, Methods, and Messiness: Insights for Qualitative Research Analysis* Edited Volume of the Proceedings of the 5th Annual Qualitative Research Symposium at the University of Bath, Chapter 6, entitled *Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey* (Westerveld, 2019).

diverse (as discussed in Cassell and Johnson, 2006; Reason and Bradbury, 2008). It is particularly suited for investigations in the management fields (Gill and Johnson, 2002).

AR carries a strong set of axiological values and practices (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003; Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Greenberg and Mathoho, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Mackenzie *et al.*, 2012; Howell, 2013a):

> ➢ *an experimental and iterative relation to the research process;*
> ➢ *inclusive and innovative roles for researcher and participants;*
> ➢ *the centrality of participation, action and reflection throughout the research process;*
> ➢ *the application of theories and knowledge through action and practice;*
> ➢ *new modalities of knowledge production.*

It is organised around a series of cycles constituted of an 'action phase' followed by a 'reflection phase' followed by an 'action phase' and so forth, each phase informing the subsequent (Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Mackenzie et al., 2012). I conceptualise these phases as processes, given that action occurs during reflection and reflection occurs during action, with action and reflection overlapping and merging.

Institutionalised and strategised forms of AR have been devised for political and financial purposes. In some instances, AR has become a 'label' allocated to make a project attractive to donors (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007). Participatory Action-Research (PAR) was developed as a contextually located, community-rooted approach to overcome these shortcomings (Fals Borda, 1999; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Swantz, 2008). It entails immersed participation of the researcher through sharing the participants' daily lives 'to understand, tolerate, and respect different genders, cultures, and races and to heed the voice of Others' (Fals Borda, 1996, p. 4). Knowledge is created, developed, understood, and owned by all participants involved, disregarding elitist, scientific or academic narratives (Fals Borda, 1996). It is aligned with participatory epistemologies that endorse respectful relationships between all involved, with a focus on social justice and empowerment (Liebenberg, Wood and Wall, 2018).

In the context of Nepal, PAR has mostly been carried out with rural communities on water supply management (Lammerink, 1998), young refugee communities (Evans, 2012), community health (Gibbon, 2002), forest governance (McDougall *et al.*, 2013; Ojha, 2013) and the educational system (Koirala-Azad, 2009). However, throughout these empirical studies, 'participatory' referred to *methods*, *phases*, *effects* or the *nature of the findings*. Participants were confined to three roles: as bearers of contextual information (accessed through consultative and extractive means), as local operators of the research with a 'privileged' understanding of and contact with local populations, and as potential local enactors of the research findings. Only in Gibbon (2002) and Ojha (2013) was participation conceptualised as a process.

Drawing from my epistemological stance, I have been attentive to the complaints surrounding participation in development as a possible *site of conflict* (White, 1996) or *exercise of power* (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). These have spurred me to critically address *what participation stands for; how it is enforced, and by whom; how the aspiration for participation is socially, theoretically and methodologically constructed in social sciences and development; and how it is to be co-developed and co-navigated with the participants of the research at all times.* This contributed to my interest in critical participatory action-research (CPAR).

4.1.2.2 Critical participatory action-research (CPAR)

CPAR is embedded within transformative, emancipatory and radical paradigms (Howell, 2013) of participation and social change. It is aligned with a philosophical and methodological pluralist stance. In its enactment, CPAR is resolutely transdisciplinary – it brings together communities from different horizons and sectors, practitioners, activists and scholars, towards responding to social issues that affect vulnerable groups. What emerges from CPAR is an attention to the multidimensional and multi-layered notions of power, may they be systemic, structural, institutional, organisational or individual. It seeks to interrogate the deeply rooted and normative perpetration of inequalities, domination, asymmetries, imbalance, injustice, privilege, hierarchies, op-/repression, and conflict (Torre *et al.*, 2012) –

this in the relation to the humans and settings involved in the research, the knowledge generated throughout the research and its effects on the communities it involves. CPAR is particularly suited for studies in the development sector, as it allows for an acknowledgment of micro, meso and macro levels of power. It embraces the principles deriving from feminist and Indigenous ethico-onto-epistemologies (Kara, 2018, pp. 25–27): relational accountability (how research unfolding can preserve the research relations), communality of knowledge (everyone holds valuable knowledge), reciprocity (mutuality in and throughout relationships with research participants and settings) and benefit sharing (participants and settings also benefit from the research).

CPAR is closely connected to *authentic participation*, an epistemology devised by Fals Borda (2013) which reconciles academic and popular knowledges. Authentic participation recognises experiential, situated and local knowledge, seeks to develop a horizontal relation between researcher and researched, and considers participation as a means to challenge systemic oppression, achieve societal change and justice, and reach emancipation (Fals Borda, 1996, 2013). It involves a symmetric relationship between the research partners, full participation throughout the design and enactment of social research, and 'systematic restitution' (Fals Borda, 1999, p. 15). This can be done by adapting how findings are shared and disseminated to ensure these processes are carried out using languages and ways (networks, outputs, communicational strategies…) that are tailored to a variety of audiences, so as to avoid knowledge siloes and exclusions. Authentic participation is particularly aligned with the extended epistemology introduced earlier.

Sykes and Treleaven (2009) have argued that critical action research bears some fundamental differences to ethnography, notably in relation to the positions of researchers and participants, the co-construction of knowledge and the connection with power issues and relations. However, throughout this research, I found that combining – in the methodological pluralistic sense – rather than separating CPAR from ethnographic approaches was profoundly useful. I drew from organisational and critical ethnography literature and practices to enhance the CPAR, and to accommodate for the times in which CPAR was not fully enacted (I discuss this further in section 8.2.2). *Organisational ethnography* examines the daily experiences and routines of organisational life, through immersion and interactions with staff and managers, with the purpose of shedding light on

the complexities and intricacies of organisational settings (Ybema *et al.*, 2009). It holds seven key characteristics: multi-methods fieldwork; in situ immersion; engagement with issues of power; participant- and context-centred/sensitive analysis; meaning-making and vocality; reflexivity and positionality (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, pp. 6–9). I discuss in section 4.2.3 how the last three characteristics were instrumental in the analytical process. *Critical ethnographies* are multi-pronged: they seek to include critical theories and reflexivity in the unfolding of the ethnographic endeavour (Foley, 2002); they focus on revealing issues of domination, power asymmetries, conflicts, thereby enabling a social impact grounded in the realities of the communities that partake in the research (Nyberg and Delaney, 2014). Both approaches have been increasingly 'adapted' to development research, thus relevant in the case of this project.

CPAR seeks to break down binary positions and identities such as insider-outsider, observer-observed, us-them, researcher-practitioner, researcher-participant. The engagement with research, participants and contexts is political, emancipatory and transformative. These come together in actively challenging normative narratives and stereotypes that portray groups as homogenous, dysfunctional, and destitute (Katsiaficas *et al.*, 2011; Fine, 2016). There is no distancing between/from the researcher and the researchers, the contexts, the action and the reflection (Sykes and Treleaven, 2009).

Researchers are not the knowledge-bearers and makers; instead, they are facilitators of processes of epistemic arising. In the same way, participants are not seen solely as a medium through which data is collected and gathered to inform the researcher on the study being carried out. CPAR participants are considered co-researchers, partaking in designing the direction of the research (Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Sandwick et al., 2018). Aligned with feminist and decolonial epistemologies, participants hold situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988): they are epistemic meaning-makers, as well as facilitators to settings and contexts. Criticality and reflexivity are reciprocal, which means that participants question and activate their own conceptualisations as well as critical knowledges and identities throughout the research (Fox, 2011). Reflexivity is 'the examination of both the structural and personal conditions which help us understand the knowledge we create' (Dean, 2017, pp. 10–11). Reflexivity can be useful to explore issues and practices relating to methodological,

theoretical, disciplinary underpinnings, as well as personal characteristics, which is crucial in the case of development and critical studies.

CPAR and authentic participation promote reciprocity and participation (Fals Borda, 1999, 2013; Sandwick *et al.*, 2018). In line with both these approaches, researching organisations could not be undertaken whilst remaining on the outskirts. Having worked myself in CSOs, NGOs and the development sector for the past 10+ years, I was eager to partake actively in organisational life. That meant that I moved from 'becoming-a-part-of'[42] (Ghorashi and Wels, 2008, p. 246) to 'being-a-part-of', taking an active role in supporting by providing experience, skills, time and contributions to the organisational development. I reviewed reports, participated in meetings, discussed organisational challenges with staff, shared learnings from previous professional and personal experiences, researched organisational change and strategies as these were being negotiated and played out, and attended trustees' meetings. I organised feedback meetings with the partners for us to reflect together on the research and its unfolding.

In this section, I have reviewed the processorial journey of defining a methodological approach suited to the specificities of this project. In line with the participatory philosophy underpinning the study, as well as the onus on data co-production, and the focus on power asymmetries which requires a critical stance, the methodological approach was adjusted, resulting in the CPAR approach designed for this project. In the following section, I lay out the mixed-methods drawn from ethnography and CPAR to enact the research with the partners.

---

[42] 'Becoming-a-part-of' the research site is what should be aspired to by engaged organisational ethnographers (Ghorashi and Wels, 2008).

4.2 Methods and data: processes and analysis

This section introduces the methods that were designed for the research, and how they served the purpose(s) of the research. In management research, Gill and Johnson (2002) make a case for multimethod research, that is, combining different methods stemming from different research approaches or methodologies. Here, I introduce how this was achieved through using a plurality of methods, and I then discuss the data analysis process.

4.2.1 Methods design and enactment

4.2.1.1 Participant observation

Observation is one of the historical and traditional ethnographic methods of data generation. It was initially related to colonisation, with the systematic logging of the colonial agents' journeys in new territories through recording and reporting the colonial progress back to the Empire (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Through diaries, reports and letters, colonial agents would record practices, behaviours, geographies, ecosystems and landscapes; and log 'scientific' information, such as the measurement of skulls, heads or bodies of the peoples whom they encountered. Observational accounts were therefore tainted with exoticism and heroism, enforcing scientific and disciplinary supremacy, as well as notions of ownership, superiority and what the untouched world is.

These historical insights into observation hold two purposes. They remind the researcher community that methods bear legacies, as they have served to oppress and dominate beings and lands over centuries. They also insist on the situatedness of these methods, not only in terms of times and spaces, but also voice and authority. Not all accounts are heard, because not all accounts are given, shared or considered.

In the context of this research, I carried out participant observation. This ethnographic method consists of 'immersing oneself in the social context that is being studied and being

open to the events and interactions taking place' (van der Waal, 2008, p. 34). It was designed and enacted as a reflexive and inter-subjective method. Participant observation was practiced during the three years of the doctoral research, as the interactions with the partner organisations began before and continued after the fieldwork (which is aligned with a CPAR approach).

Participant observation occurred during meetings, events, staff/board/visitors' interactions, and the daily life of organisation routine. Some key discussions and observations took place in cars or during trips away from the office, borrowing from the go-along method (Kusenbach, 2003). I accompanied staff, management and BoT members in field visits, benefiting from in situ insights unfolding in other realms than solely the contained office space.

Observations were logged in the form of handwritten notes that I then typed out and used as empirical material. They consisted of highly detailed accounts of the people and settings involved, research and reflexive questions, decision-making processes, *who* speaks *when* and *for whom*, articulation of priorities, partnership narrative development, context-related interrogations, speaking time, key issues. Observations were shared throughout the fieldwork with different participants in different settings through reflexive meetings.

4.2.1.2   Note-taking and autoethnographic journaling[43]

As part of approach to observation, I was interested in the modalities of *note-taking* and *diarying*. Being immersed in the organisations for over a year required a cautious journaling of experiences and contributions, and I found that I could not separate this reflexive account from the observation, note-taking or the theoretical linkages (Hollway, 1989). Often, whilst typing out notes after a day in the organisations, new insights on inter-personal dynamics, recurrent challenges and role/position of researcher would overlap. I found that reflexive and analytical journaling went hand in hand with the recording of personal and professional

---

[43] Excerpts from this section are drawn from *Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey* (Westerveld, 2019).

experiences as they were unfolding. It allowed for new data to arise organically, or as Brinkmann calls it 'stumble data' that stands for the process through which data becomes data (Brinkmann, 2014, pp. 723–724).

I combined note taking and autoethnographic journaling methods by designing a template divided in two sections. Firstly, I was to fill out a description of practical details and logged main events, reflections arising from the participant observation, actions undertaken with/for the organisations, type of data and key words. I annotated the type of data as they were being generated (informal, relational, sensorial, embodied, intuitive, reflexive, critical), as well as the contributions to the organisation's daily life, the effects of the research process on myself, the participants and the organisations.

Secondly, I developed a table inspired from Coffey's (1999) adaptation of LeCompte and Preissle's work on conditions of the fieldwork. The framework references different issues of immersed ethnography, and the personal experiences of the researcher in relation to each one of these issues. There are *personal* issues, accounting for selfhood, subjectivity and the experiential nature of the immersion; *participatory* issues, that relate to the interactions with participants and settings, and the effects on the body and the self; *advocacy* issues, delving into voice (who is the voice for whom), organisational allegiances and affiliations; *roles and relationships*, as shifting and flexible; *boundary* issues, that contemplate the immersion effects and processes of organisational integration; and *ethical* issues, that carry on institutional, procedural, academic and Indigenous ethical paradigms.

Date	*Enter date*
Location	*Enter location*
Week	*Enter week no of fieldwork*
Day	*Enter day no of fieldwork*
Participants present	*Enter name of [key] participants present at location*
Main events	*Enter summary of events that have taken place over the course of the day*
Questions	*Enter questions that need to be brought up with settings, supervisors or self*
Actions	*Enter list of completed actions or actions to be completed*
Work achieved for the partner organisation	*Enter details of work achieved for the partner organisations*
Raw data and type	*Enter data generated and type*
Key words	*Inform key words*
Reflexive notes	*Enter reflexive accounts of the day, surprises, tensions, resistances… with regards to research process, setting, participants, etc.*

Fieldwork issues[44]
    Personal issues
        Biography/Selfhood/ Subjectivity
        Experience
        Effects
    Participatory issues
        Body & self in contexts, interactions & roles
    Advocacy issues
        Voice
        Affiliation
    Roles and relationships
    Boundary issues
        Immersion
        Integration
    Ethical issues
	Enter accounts of issues that
	    have been experienced,
	    have been resolved,
	    are recurrent,
	    have provoked some personal reaction,
	    are having incidence and/or impact on data generation,
	    are emotional and physical manifestations of discomfort,
	    situate the researcher within a vaster context of research,
	    are questioning the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the research design or enactment,
	    are researcher's shortcomings,
	    might be inter-individual tensions or frictions,
	    are experiences stemming from the research process,
	    are accounts of researcher's reflexive insights,
	    are experiences of conflicting loyalty or allegiance …

Table 6: Observation, journaling and reflexivity template

I wrote most days during the PUK immersion and every day during the PN immersion, using voice typing and automatic writing. In total, the note-taking/journaling yielded 62 complete

---

[44] 'Fieldwork issues' was inspired by Coffey's book *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (1999) featuring her adaptation of LeCompte and Preissle's 'Conditions of the fieldwork' (p. 68).

templates (200 pages, 51,038 words) and 11 detailed meeting notes (11,404 words) with research partners.

Note taking and diarying specificities	Type of settings
- UK: 35 logs - Nepal: 38 logs Total: 73 logs	- Day-to-day office immersion - Partner meetings - Donor meetings - Public events - Internal events - Board of Trustee meetings - Internal meetings (staff) - Team meetings (project/programme) - Management meetings - Organisational Conferences - Autoethnographic and reflexive journaling

Table 7: Overview of data generation through observation

4.2.1.3   Interviews

Interviews were another key method used throughout the course of the fieldwork, organised and carried out with participants from the partner organisations and the international development sector. Qualitative interviews consist of a discussion between researcher and participant around a specific theme: the accounts, stories and narratives of participants are considered data sources (Bauman *et al.*, 2011). Their subjectivities, worldviews and understandings are treated as valuable information that can shed light on social phenomena and interactions.

Participant selection

Participants were recruited from within the organisations (PO), from partnering organisations or from the international development sector (P-ID). (PO) participants were divided in two groups: staff and board members. With (PO) members, the focus was on mid to senior roles (management and programme/finance managers or officers) with professional and sectoral understanding; direct relations with external actors involved in the

development arena; and an interest to reflect on partnership modalities. I interviewed three staff members from PUK and nine staff from PN, chosen for their experience of the organisation and the development sector, and their role and responsibilities within the partnership or with development partners (funders or CSOs).

In the UK, the office being considerably smaller meant that there were far fewer (PO) participants to recruit from the staff. The three staff who had been there the longest were prioritised (one member of staff arrived during the fieldwork). I interviewed all the BoT of PUK having met most of them during previous events and BoT meetings or working group meetings, supported by staff members and key BoT members to get in touch with trustees. I benefitted from recommendations and support in selecting two members of the PN BoT who had been involved in a number of projects and donor relations, and with whom I could speak in English.

In Nepal, the organisation counts 200+ members of staff, with a more centralised leadership and management identified nexus, and a board that is less invested in the day-to-day activities. Therefore, priority was given to interviewing staff who had regular dealings with external partners, and two members of the board that I had the opportunity to accompany for a field visit, and who spoke English. The 'other' category falls under the (P-ID) participants, who were introduced to me by a PN participant.

Interviewees specification		
UK = 12 Male: 7 Female: 5 Staff: 3 Trustees: 7	Nepal = 11 Male: 6 Female: 5 Staff: 8 Trustees: 2 Other: 1	Other = 5 Male: 2 Female: 3

Table 8: Interviewees specification

I used daily organisational immersion as 'a way in', that is, a means to locate the participants within the organisational constellation and to see them operating in their posts (Ybema *et al.*, 2009). This gave me insights into the scope of their role, as well as their responsibilities and interactions with staff and donors. Informal, routine and daily encounters, working

within the same spatial settings (office, room or desk) and attending team, partner or management meetings informed the questions and the focus of the interviews that were in part tailored according to these preludes (Moeran, 2009).

Participant sampling was considered 'according to theoretical rather than statistical principles' (Hollway, 1989, p. 16). I drew from Euro-Western (snowball and purposive) and Indigenous (relationality and respect) approaches to sampling (Kara, 2018).

Key (PO) supported me in identifying and contacting (P-ID actors) (partner organisations, donors, consultants and INGO/NGO leaders and workers). Opening up, albeit on a very limited scale, to development actors from other agencies and organisations proved helpful for enhanced and critical understanding, be it organisation, sector or country-related.

Interview type and style

The interviews were designed as semi- and 'less-structured' discussions to allow space and time for 'unofficial knowledge' to emerge (van der Waal, 2008, p. 35). Semi-structured interviews are prepared around themes, questions and issues of relevance to the research, but for which the questions are neither closed (yes/no) nor overly rigid in their chronology. The conversation might go off-track, and lead to new topics. For example, some questions might be omitted because they are irrelevant in/for the discussion at hand, while aspects of the participant's sharing might be pushed as opening new avenues for the research. Bauman *et al.* (2011) argue that '[t]he types of questions an interviewer asks, and the way they listen to and interpret the answers they are given, undoubtedly help to shape the nature of the knowledge produced' (p. 8).

The emphasis of qualitative interviews is primarily on the *talking* – what is being said or the words being used. Additional attention can be brought to the *interacting* – what the participant thinks is expected of them, what the researcher and the participant expect the other party to be familiar with or not to know, how the researcher asks the questions and how the participant responds to the questions (Aitken *et al.*, 2011). When embedded in larger epistemological considerations, the absences, the hesitations, the silences, the repetitions also hold meaning; they reveal unconscious resistances or signify entrenched

beliefs around what is acceptable, what is expected, what is sought after, what should not be voiced, what does not count (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

Therefore, in some instances of the research, the interviews were 'less-structured': this denomination comes as a response to Bauman *et al.*'s (2011) argument that an 'unstructured interview' does not exist, because interviewers and interviewees hold expectations, understandings and assumptions around the interview interaction and the research process. These expectations bring some inherent structure to the discussion that is played out through the researcher's role and the enactment of the conversation. Thus, it is possible to 'structure [an interview] less' by being attentive to how the role is enacted, the quality of the interaction between interviewer and participant, and the style of conversational flow that is generated throughout the interview (Bauman *et al.*, 2011).

At other times, 'free interviews' were preferred. Free interviews meant that I had minimal input in the length, format or direction of the conversation, allowing for a free flow from the interviewee. These took place with some participants who had experience of the international development sector and who 'used' the space and the time of the interview as a container to share their opinions on the sector and its shortcomings. These free interviews responded indirectly to the research questions, but offered informative insights into an otherwise closeted sector; they were mainly used for their meta value (contexts, histories, sector-related politics, tensions).

One interview was designed around purposefully bringing together two key participants: the previous and current directors of PUK. The open and less-structured interview covered their work, decisions, strategies, rationales, relations with the different partners (trustees, staff members, PN, donors, volunteers, regional and national networks…). The aim was to shed light on how different staff might bring around/endorse/provoke significant organisational change, as well as the inter-individual legacies inherent to the specific leadership roles.

Interview preparation

Prior to the interview, participants were given information with regards to the research, and were fully aware of the topics to be discussed. This approach is consistent with participatory methodologies and participant-driven research, as it focuses on the relational dynamics with

participants, and the development of a rapport that exceed data gathering. Upon confirmation of participation, I sent the consent form and the information sheet via email for a preliminary read; some participants decided to sign the consent form electronically, while others preferred a paper version.

In some instances, participants asked to pre-view the interview questionnaire to prepare their answers. This pointed out the level of tension that interviews can represent for participants and the necessity for the researcher to act as a facilitator. I used these requests as opportunities to co-negotiate the terms of participation, sharing a lay-out of themes and related-interrogations, whilst discussing the fluid nature of the conversation, and their roles as co-leaders in the exchange. Prospective participants were provided with the following statement which they were reminded of before the interview:

> *'This interview will allow to discuss your views, experiences and critical insights on partnerships in international development. You can disclose as much or as little as you feel comfortable to; you are free to share your views 'off the record'. 'Off the record' excerpts will not be used in the research, but they will enable the researcher to better understand relations or situations at hand'.*

The interviews were prepared according to the availability, role and experience of the participant. Themes were developed on a participant-specific basis, with further questions emerging ad hoc throughout the interview.

Interview unfolding

Interviews were carried out in person, over the phone or using Skype/Zoom. I used semi-structured interviews with (PO), referring to mutual experiences (e.g. 'that meeting was so long'; 'this project is running late'), terminology (organisation, donor, project specific) and accounts (e.g. 'that story was really surprising!') to create deeper connections around issues relevant to the research and relations of trust with the participants. This strategy was considerably more important in the context of Nepal, where language gaps could have otherwise hindered my understanding of the interview or the told stories, thus causing some discrepancies in how the interview would have run and my analysis of its content.

For each participant, general and specific questions were prepared aligned with their history, understandings and views of partnerships in ID, and their organisational role. For some participants, the conversation concentrated on micro-experience accounts, whilst others remained more generic and superficial.

Semi-structured and less-structured interviews were more appropriate with (P-ID), for which I drew from personal experiences in the development sector and in different roles to instigate questions. Some (P-ID) had direct relations with PN and discussed their relationship with PN specifically, whilst other discussions were more general in content and scope.

I used semi-structured interviews with BoT members, tailoring questions to their specific roles within the board and the working groups, or their contributions to the organisational strategy and project implementation.

18 interviews were carried out face-to-face, and 11 over the phone, or using Skype/WhatsApp (two interviews were conducted at two different times which explains how this totals to 29) (see Appendix I). All were recorded on two separate devices (phone and professional digital audio recorder) after having obtained oral consent from the interviewee. For each physical interview, I provided a safe space (either arranging a separate room in the organisation or in other settings removed from the public) to ensure confidentiality. Recognising that power relations cannot be diffused through electronic reassurance, we reviewed the information sheet and consent form for questions to emerge, discussed the 'off the record' option, and that participants were free to withdraw from the research at any point throughout the course of the interview. The 'off the record' (OTR) option allowed the participants to pre- or post-announce that excerpts of their account were to be excluded from the interview transcripts and not be cited in the thesis.

Then, I proceeded to ask:

'how did you get here?'

as an icebreaker. The icebreaker question provided time for participants to warm up to the interview (up to 20 min): focusing on the individual and their story created a fertile ground to draw from in designing my subsequent questions. This is a method which recognises the intersubjectivity of the interview as a shared time and space during which I was not concerned with retrieving information (participants as data providers in an extractive

relation of data gathering) but was interested in their lives and the accounts of significant moments and relations (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

In the same way, the interview was more of a conversation between us than a question-answer dynamic; I shared personal experiences, ideas and insights from the research, which created new dynamic subjectivities, and bridged the researcher/researched divide (Aitken *et al.*, 2011). The interview style was 'conversational, flexible and fluid, and the purpose […] achieved through active engagement by interviewer and interviewee around relevant issues, topics and experiences during the interview itself' (Bauman *et al.*, 2011). This interactive, situational and generative approach to the production of empirical material was adapted prior to and throughout the interview. I focused on facilitating the interview and the sharing of the accounts rather than directing it (Bauman *et al.*, 2011), acting as a sounding board, and using repetition or paraphrase to entice the participants to develop their thoughts. I carried out interviews right at the end of the organisational immersion. Throughout all interviews, I took hand-written notes. I carried out all interviews in English besides two: one of the PN staff preferred speaking in Nepali, and I relied on a Nepali doctoral researcher based in Kathmandu who has previously worked with Sheffield scholars to translate the interview in situ. Another one was carried in French with a development partner, and translated directly for the interview transcript by myself.

Interview closure

With PUK participants, I closed the interviews with an *invitation for abstraction* (inspired by Bauman *et al.*, 2011); in this context, *an invitation for abstraction* consisted of a participant-specific question, encouraging projection:

'What would you say to yourself from that position?'

'What route would you design to attain that position/role/status?'

I used these in relation to issues that had arisen throughout the interview: for example, a participant expressing frustration at an organisational practice that they had identified as problematic, and for which they could not see any change. For this, I articulated two questions. The first one was 'Imagine yourself 10 years from now, having moved on in your career, and having accumulated a number of other experiences in medium and large-size

organisations. When you look back at this situation from that senior role, what can you advise to yourself now?'. The second one 'Imagine you have the opportunity to go for a coffee with a senior [management role specifically related to the participant's role], and you discuss this frustrating situation with them. They have three learnings to share with you on how you could best resolve the issue. What do you think they would recommend you do?'.

After each interview, I completed an *interview marking* sheet which recorded the main themes we had discussed under 'chapters', organically retracing the emergence of new theme. These chapters led to the identification of recurring issues and challenges, and informed subsequent interviews. The 'interview markings' were organised around

> chapter number + theme + short outline of points discussed.

I also included a section of free writing around 'how it felt to interview x' which allowed me to record immediate post-interview emotional reactions. The markings became a new source of data (discussed in the next section), to which I added a personal and reflexive account of the experience of interviewing each participant. They totalled 52 pages, with a total word count of 17,082.

4.2.1.4   Secondary data

Secondary data were multiple and used towards two aims. Grey literature was used to support the findings chapters and entered in NVivo. It consisted of a multitude of resources found mostly online, with some resources purchased during the fieldwork at the Martin Chautari library in Kathmandu which enabled for some Nepali authors and texts to be accessed (Rudrum, 2016).

Sector- and organisation-related secondary data were organised mainly around:

For PUK, I collected documents updated until beginning of 2019, mostly composed of trustee minutes, internal governance policies, impact and financial reports; for PN, I gathered mostly audit and financial reports, impact and evaluation reports and funding applications. These were reviewed and analysed through an Excel spreadsheet (type, focus, reference to partnership).

In this section, I have reviewed the design and roll-out of ethnographic, reflexive and CPAR methods. In the following section, I develop the data processing of primary and secondary sources. Empirical material analysis involves data processing, preparation, codification, categorisation, description, analysis, interpretation and write-up (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013b; Kara, 2018). I describe the different components and processes – including the methods – involved in the analysis of the rich data yielded from the CPAR, and how these were designed to cater for the specificities of this study.

4.2.2   Analysing the empirical material

4.2.2.1   Data processing

Transcribing the interviews

Interviews lasted between 31:42 minutes (due to Skype difficulties) and 02:35:29, with most between 60 and 90 minutes, above the 45-60 minutes initially planned, with 27 interviews

in total. Two were carried out over two encounters due to length and scope. The 27 interviews produced close to 40 hours of raw recordings.

The freeware VLC was used for the transcription. I transcribed all interviews manually: 21/27 in full, accounting for pauses, silences, hesitations and repetitions, with a strict adherence to logging each of these linguistic variations. The transcription procedure was modified after I realised that logging each minuscule linguistic oscillation hindered the overall transcription as it rendered it unreadable (Hollway, 1989). The oscillations were enhanced through the decreased playback speed, so I focused on accounting for notable hesitations, pauses, repetitions and silences, in the aim of maintaining a balanced

transcript meaning vs linguistic oscillation.

For 3/27, I proceeded to exclude short excerpts when participants discussed side experiences; and for 3/27, I resorted to data sampling (all were P-ID participants going 'off track'). OTR was also transcribed and highlighted in the text.

The transcripts amount to 539 pages, with a total word count of 264,908.

Interview specification	Transcript specification

No of interviews = 27
Of which
    1 paired interview (2 people)
    2 participants interviewed twice
    1 interview in French
    1 interview in Nepali with translator
Shortest interview: 00:31:42
Longest interview: 02:35:25
No of interviews
    under 1 hour: 4
    above 2 hours: 2
Hours of recording: 39:35:42
Interview markings: 27
	No of transcripts = 29
	Of which
	    23 complete transcriptions
	    3 sampled transcription
	    3 partial transcription, of which 1 translated interview
	Shortest transcript: 4,229 words
	Longest transcript: 20,606 words
	Total transcribed pages: 539
	Total word count: 264,908

Table 9: Overview of data generation through interviews

Categorising and coding

The NVivo software was used for data coding, categorisation and analysis. NVivo is a software best suited for qualitative research analysis, that allows for text-based sources and media sources to be compiled towards cross-referencing and analysis. It uses nodes to highlight trends, recurrences, connections and relationships.

Throughout the fieldwork, recurrent themes emerged from the interview markings and note-taking and were annotated in a separate document; these led to the development of nodes. Nodes were re-worked during the transcription period, and amended over the course of the data analysis. Each 'mother node' corresponds to a theme that is divided into sub-themes named 'child nodes'. There are a total of nine mother nodes and 29 child-nodes (see Appendix II): these were finalised upon completion of the transcription phase, and were tested to avoid thematic overlap and cross-coding. Cross-coding occurs when nodes have been poorly designed and produce counter-intuitive categorisation which does not support the thematic analysis.

The notes and journaling data were compiled in the software Evernote in which the journaling template was designed (as discussed in section 4.2.1.2). These were then converted to OneNote before being retrieved in the NVivo software. All primary data were logged in an Excel spreadsheet cataloguing word count and page count.

Word format transcripts and interview markings were added to the software once they had been anonymised and pseudonymised (more in the Ethics section 4.3). The 27 interview transcripts were unpacked by allocating excerpts to different nodes, sometimes simultaneously under various nodes depending on their thematic overlap (see Appendix III).

4.2.3   Interpretive data analysis

The interpretive paradigm considers 'social reality as a constructed world built in and through meaningful interpretations' and has increasingly been applied to organisational and management studies (Prasad and Prasad, 2002, pp. 6–7). Interpretive data analysis (IDA) emanates from the philosophical underpinnings of the research – a constructivist

ontological and extended epistemological perspective on critical and participatory social research.

Data analysis and interpretation are one of the loci of researcher power (along with data production and research design). They are the realms within which a normative framework (counting, describing, coding) can take over the subjective experience of engaging with data (Kara, 2018). For this thesis, I transcend the normative engagement with empirical material by performing IDA in two significant and interconnected manners: a thematic interpretation of the empirical material, and a dynamic intersubjective and self-reflexive analysis. Thereby, I contend that participants are not unitary rational subjects or non-contradictory agents of social knowledge (Hollway, 1989). I commit to opening up to inconsistent, variable and multiple accounts which allow for the (inter-)subjectivity of the lived experiences to seep through the empirical material. This can be done through an interpretivist organisational ethnography, organised around three key components: meaning-making, multivocality, and reflexivity and positionality (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, pp. 7–9). I have combined these three components with Finlay's (2002; 2003) reflexivity variants[45], namely the intersubjective reflection, mutual collaboration and social critique variants I describe below.

Thematic interpretation was directly connected with meaning making. Meaning-making refers to the unpacking of the empirical material that was co-produced throughout the research. It can allude to symbolic language, symbolic acts and symbolic objects[46]. It took place throughout the three years of the project:

---

[45] Drawing from a plurality of research traditions – including feminist and critical theories – Finlay (2002, 2008) developed a typology of five reflexivity variants, namely: introspection, intersubjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique and ironic deconstruction.

[46] According to Ybema *et al.* (2009), symbolic language is concerned with 'narratives, discourses, stories, metaphors, myths, slogans, jargon, jokes, gossip, rumours and anecdotes found in every day talk and text'; symbolic acts refer to 'rites and rituals, practices, customs, routines'; and symbolic objects deal with 'built spaces, architectural design, clothing, and other physical artefacts' (p. 8).

Throughout the three years, preliminary trends emerged organically and iteratively. I organised these thematically on a separate document, with head themes under which subthemes were fed. This exercise was continued whilst I transcribed and categorised the empirical material. The themes largely informed the coding exercise. However, they did not rigidify the engagement with the empirical material, rather they shaped a form of relation which was permanently being redesigned as new issues arose.

The thematic interpretation drew on the nodes derived from the meaning-making, and involved repetitive iterative engagement with the empirical material. I moved in between (not necessarily in this order): the transcript → the coding → the node theme → thematic queries → overlap node themes → the recording → the interview marking → the transcript → related transcripts → the coding → the node theme → thematic queries → overlap node themes → … so as to reallocate inconsistency and non-linearity in the thematically coded excerpts and to produce 'a gradual *convergence* of insights coming from the research and the text' (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016, p. 59, italic in original text). This was possible as I decided to overlap thematic coding in an effort to avoid dominant themes from overshadowing co-existing themes. The thematic analysis unfolds throughout the three findings chapters with specific themes allocated to each RQ.

Multivocality relates to the different narratives that compose and shape the organisation. These were obtained throughout the interviews, the participant observation, and OTR. Two of Finlay's (2002) variants were particularly crucial in enabling multivocality: the intersubjective relation and the mutual collaboration ones. The former focuses on *mutual meaning* (p. 8), recognising the situated and dynamic relation developed between researcher and researched, and researcher and research. It was practiced during all

interviews, participant observation and authentic participation, and as an overall part of the CPAR approach. The latter allowed for a dynamic dialogue to take place between researcher and researched, which is particularly relevant in the case of co-produced social research (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). Regular reflexive meetings with the research partners, ongoing dialogue with the organisational managers and presentations/feedback sessions throughout the organisations' annual conferences provided space/time for mutual collaboration.

Finally, reflexivity and positionality delve into the researcher's meaning-making process, and how previous experiences, worldviews and beliefs might influence this process (Ybema *et al.*, 2009; Adkins *et al.*, 2011; May and Perry, 2011; Dean, 2017). When applying reflexivity and positionality to the data analysis, I investigated my role in the (power/)knowledge production that stemmed from the research. Reflexivity and positionality are deeply connected to Finlay's (2002) introspection and social critique variants. Introspection is intended to enhance self-understanding on how knowledge and findings were produced, and how this relates to the positions of researcher and researched, and more widely, to the contexts of knowledge production; whilst reflexivity through social critique examines research as a nexus of power between researcher and researched. I approached introspection as the critical examination of self (researcher) throughout the research process and social critique as the critical examination of research as a process (epistemology, ontology, methodology, methods).

This led me to ask questions such as: how has my presence in the organisations impacted on the shaping of the organisational discourse? How I have contributed to legitimise power relations? In what ways might I have reinforced knowledge exclusion or siloes? Have the organisations harmonised or conformed their partnerial narrative to match what they thought I wanted to hear? How have my assumptions of the partnership shaped the ways in which I engaged with the organisations, participants and empirical materials? In terms of positionality: how has a sustained engagement with the participants and the organisations influenced my criticality? How have I shared preliminary findings in a way that might have been protective of future relations? All these considerations were partly addressed in the autoethnographic journaling and the interview marking, but are also an intrinsic part of the analysis.

These were recorded in the journaling and the interview markings, and also shared with my supervisors and key research partners throughout the research.

This section has laid out the analytical approach that was taken to processing the broad empirical materials. Through combining thematic analysis, reflexivity and multivocality, I ensured meaning-making did not remove the nuances from the participants' accounts. In the next section, I examine the ethical principles that underpinned the enactment of the research. The ethics were simultaneously conceptualised as an intrinsic part of the philosophy as well as a required research process and a key component informing on the relation with the participants, settings and data. I introduce the *ethical continuum* that I developed specifically for the research.

4.3   Ethical considerations

4.3.1   Ethical frameworks informing the CPAR

Acknowledging the roles and centrality of ethics in social science research is fundamental (Flick, 2011). The nature of and the methods used to enact the research meant that the data generated was 'personal, identifiable and idiosyncratic material' (Mason, 2002, p. 201), possibly rendering the participants and/or organisation recognisable within the international development sector in the UK and Nepal (and probably beyond). This section examines how the ethical guidelines supported me in protecting the participants.

The tangible effects of research participation on participants and organisations are a crucial consideration to take into account when carrying out social research. In the case of this project, these effects include: impacting on life trajectories, careers or social circles for the participants as a result of their participation; interfering in participants' career progression or retention within the organisation; disrupting funding from and relations with donors; crystallising inter-individual or inter-organisational tensions; hampering further partnerial opportunities, etc. This shows the extent to which issues of participant confidentiality, safety

and anonymity are crucial, as all social research is in effect sensitive (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong, 2008).

Therefore, it was imperative I take measures that care for the participants, such as protecting all data sources, anonymising accounts (recordings, transcripts, interview markings), and pseudonymising the participants' names, all other mentioned individuals and all organisations referenced throughout any data. Pseudonymisation happened in four different steps: participants were allocated a number and a code (for UK participants: PUK_01; for Nepal participants: PN_01; for other (P-ID) participants: PTR_01); then names were generated for each participant. UK[47] and Nepali[48] names were developed using online resources. Nepali names were then sent through to a key participant based in Nepal, in order to check that I hadn't attributed meaning or social status through the pseudonym. All names are Brahmin/Chhetri and an accurate reflection of the PN management team.

Once these had been agreed upon, all names were inserted in a spreadsheet against the corresponding participant code, making sure that the pseudonym and the real name never featured in a same document, and were not associable without a prior understanding of the coding system. I modified all names during transcription by allocating pseudonyms, generating pseudonyms as new names appeared throughout the recordings. Organisation names were logged and then anonymised; for recurring and critical ones (specifically when discussing key donors for example), generic names were created.

Due to the limited participant sample size, and in order to protect the identity of the participants, I have labelled them as either 'development stakeholder' (consultant, donor, CSO leader), 'PN' or 'PUK'. No further indication will be provided such as gender, role or seniority. To further protect participants (this is applicable in the case of three key participants), I have chosen to anonymise the quotes (removing pseudonyms), and I intentionally do not provide any information as to the identity of the participant. This aims to remove the 'personal' voice and instead, present an account which is representative and shared across participants. When exploring issues connected with power asymmetries, anonymity aims to ensure the safety of the participants who shared controversial

---

[47] UK names were generated using the website https://britishsurnames.co.uk

[48] Nepali names were 'crafted' using both https://www.momjunction.com/baby-names/nepali and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Nepalese_given_names

ideas/accounts. For this reason, I sought to avoid cross-references of quotes across the thesis which could have pointed to a specific participant. Although this could be considered as hampering the overall consistency of the empirical materials throughout the thesis, these given quotes were carefully selected for their contributions to the arguments and the analysis.

Electronically signed consent forms were saved in my password protected university account, and paper forms were scanned, electronically saved, and paper versions destroyed. Transcripts, interview markings, notes and journaling were stored on password-protected electronic devices, and paper documents were kept in locked houses or rooms throughout the course of the research. Anonymisation took place after all transcripts had been finalised and were checked before insertion in the NVivo software. Recordings were kept on a password-protected phone and deleted from the audiorecorder once they had been downloaded on the password-protected laptop. All actions outlined in the ethics application were completed towards data protection and confidentiality, as well as participants' safety.

4.3.2   Arguing for an ethical plurality in applied social research

The critical and participatory paradigms that underpin this research encourage a pluralistic approach to ethics which seeks not only participant safety and anonymity, but also participant and researcher wellbeing, respect towards the settings of research, and reciprocal outcomes.

Indigenous, feminist and decolonial epistemologies informed the axiological considerations, bringing together issues relating to relational, participatory, partnership, praxis, development, methods, and local ethics. An ethics axiology recognises values as beliefs, emotional responses, morals. It is aligned with the theoretical framework and aims to address issues of power, whilst enacting the research with integrity, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. This exercise generated what I have named the ethical continuum of the critical action researcher (see below):

Figure 5: The *ethics continuum* guiding the CPAR

I argue for an *ethics plurality* in CPAR to address the complexity and the multiple dimensions in which ethical considerations are at play (organisational, interactional, relational, actional). The ethics axiology becomes a *continuum*, where ethics are the 'ecology of action' (Morin, 2004).

The ethics were conceptualised as part of the philosophy, intrinsically connected to the epistemology and the ontology that shaped and guided the entire research (see section 4.1). They were also fundamental in the CPAR design, informing on the relational dynamics that developed with the participants during the data co-production, but also with the empirical materials throughout the data processing. Finally, the ethical continuum supported me in the diarying and the reflexivity that underpinned the entire research, as I drew on self-care, care and praxis ethics in the fieldwork experiences and relations, but also in the processes of meaning-making during the write-up.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have introduced the philosophical and methodological approaches that underpinned the research. The extended epistemology constituted the foundations of the approach and informed the design and enactment of the CPAR. Organisational and critical ethnography, incorporated in the CPAR, were carried out in situ using a mixed-methods approach, which yielded a broad range of empirical materials. I discussed how these were tailored to the research participants, organisations and settings, as well as the learnings that they generated. Empirical materials were analysed drawing from interpretivist organisational ethnography and reflexive paradigms.

Aligned with these paradigms, my ethical continuum informed my relationship with the participants and data throughout and post immersion.

CHAPTER 5: PARTNERSHIP CONCEPTUALISATIONS THROUGH THE PRISM OF NARRATIVES

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters, DPs play a crucial role in international development. Framed around values of trust, reciprocity and mutuality, their supposed aim is to deliver interventions to support the achievement of social justice. Taking place between organisations located in the Global North and the Global South, DPs have been shown to display issues of power in relations between the partners and in practices between a stronger and a weaker partner. This chapter is dedicated to addressing RQ1:

How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of international development?

This RQ was developed with the research partners; it deals with alignment or lack thereof between partnerial value sets and practices, and how these might be informed by power relations that (re)produce inequalities and asymmetries. Throughout this chapter, I investigate how participants' accounts and shared experiences of the SDP and DPs with development stakeholders are subject to conceptual and practical dissonances, revealing issues of entrenched power. For this exercise, I examine how partnership narratives are infused with rhetorics of unity and cooperation, whilst practices are fraught with imbalances and conflicts. I start with outlining the different ways in which PUK and PN refer to the partnership, and the associated assumptions that lie behind the concept of DPs. I finish the chapter with a discussion on how the DP narratives echo global and organisational rhetorics.

5.1 The partnership narratives as organising principle

Throughout this chapter, I introduce the different partnership narratives articulated by members of PUK and PN. I have organised these around three major themes, and show how the narratives draw on associated assumptions and shared perspectives to circulate throughout the SDP. I conceptualise narratives as the structured stories, beliefs and ideals about partnerships that are constructed, produced and mobilised by individuals working in development organisations, and that circulate among the individuals and the organisations involved in DPs. Here, my focus lies on the narratives produced and circulating in PUK and PN.

5.1.1 PUK's partnership narratives[49]

The first narrative that I introduce is 'the partnership as a family'. This narrative focuses on the ties and bonds that characterise the partnership, stemming from a sense of privileged historicity.

5.1.1.1 The 'partnership as a family' narrative

The 'partnership as a family' narrative circulates through different realms of PUK: I found it commonly referred to in organisational documents (internal and external communications) and drawn upon by the participants during organisational immersion and interviews. The following excerpt was found on the PUK website:

---

[49] I intentionally start with PUK for three reasons: firstly, I started the fieldwork with PUK, which meant that I was primarily exposed to the family narrative via the PUK perspective. Secondly, my own progression throughout the fieldwork led me to consider PUK's perspective on partnerships as the overarching framework for the partnerial relations. This was subsequently challenged during my time with PN and further review of the literature on power in DPs discussed in Chapter 2 and 3. Thirdly, I wish to illustrate my own internal journey from an adherence to the PUK's vision of partnership, to the in-depth analysis of the internalised and problematic assumptions that lie at the core of the narratives.

> PUK is one third of the [P] family. PUK and PN were established together back in 2005 to support each other. PA was established later in 2007, and together, we all work together towards our shared vision and charitable objectives. (PUK website, consulted on 29/04/2020)

This excerpt illustrates the constructed vision of the family, in which all organisations are linked since set-up; it suggests that the family ties have created closeness and togetherness between the organisations. It is a narrative that permeates the internal and external communicational strategies, and that emerges on regular occasions as part of discussions on strategic development. The family narrative is instrumental in defining the identity of PUK ('one third of family') and to explain its *raison d'être* ('to support each other'). The relations described are complementary and collaborative ('we all work together').

The family narrative permeates communicational outputs, such as the Skills Training Programme Handbook destined to GP volunteers who go out to Nepal through a mentorship programme, or recruitment procedures, as found online in the job description advertising for the director role in 2017:

> [A] respected international development organisation dedicated to ensuring everyone, everywhere, even those in the most remote places in the world, has access to primary healthcare, basic education and livelihood opportunities. We do this through close partnership with our sister organisation PN who lead on design and implementation for our integrated health, education and livelihoods projects in remote Nepal. (PUK Director's job description 2017 found on CharityJob.co.uk)

It is accompanied by semantics of siblinghood through the reference to a 'sister organisation'. The imagined nature of the kinship is horizontal, suggesting that the organisations grow side by side. It is directly connected to the axiological ideals of long-term engagement and trustworthy relations discussed in Chapter 2 (see Figure 1, p. 48). This is emphasised also via an associated aspiration for equality:

> It's a partnership, they are equal to us in every way. (Elizabeth, PUK)

The family narrative, supported by references to siblinghood and ideals of equality, is concerned with conveying an overarching identity which bypasses issues of hierarchy.

Therein lies the assumption that the SDP comprises of non-centralised and non-hierarchical relations, and that therefore, the partnership is different from centre/periphery traditional collaborations (Geddes, 2008).

For PUK, the mention of family and closeness is not only a means to determine organisational identity, it is also embedded within a strong axiological assumption, that working in this specific way corresponds to a sectoral ideal:

> We're all working towards the vision of healthcare, for everyone, everywhere, however remote. And education and livelihoods. And this is the [P] family. That's the dream! (Simon, PUK)

This quote infers there is a singular vision shared across the family that ties the partnership together in its work and aspirations. The shared vision is a specific partnerial derivative (product), constitutive of the partnership between PUK and PN. In the early years of the partnership set up, a Theory of Change (ToC) was designed collaboratively between key members of PN and PUK – it represents the vision and mission of the partnership. This ToC played an instrumental role in articulating the aim of PN and its work in Nepal, and how PUK could support PN to achieve this. It was captured visually and has since known a number of iterations. The ToC is used by both organisations as a conceptual illustration to represent the social issues (challenges and contextual stakes) in Nepal, and the areas in which PUK and PN intervene via programmes, projects and activities to address these issues, in collaboration with identified stakeholders.

References to a shared vision and mission were made repeatedly during events, interviews and organisational immersion, and found in many PUK communicational outputs. 'We have the same vision and mission' is associated to the family narrative as it strengthens and reinforces the assumption of unity. It was particularly striking throughout the fieldwork and during interviews:

> What we've got, is an organisation here, which works with an organisation in Nepal, with the same name, the same vision, values, mission, ethos, belief of how work should be delivered, the same objectives. (Simon, PUK)

Over time, the ToC has become more than a visual illustration – it has turned into a partnership mobiliser and was frequently referred to as a demonstration of togetherness:

> We share the same vision of wanting to improve lives in Nepal. […] [W]e're all under the same banner really. I see PUK as part of PN really. And I think that's generally how it is seen and treated, and that's the way we talk in applications to funders, as if we are part of the same organisation, because we are! (Kathleen, PUK)

In both Simon and Kathleen's quotes, the vision and mission have turned into an overarching framework for the organisations involved in the partnership. Acting as a 'banner', the vision and mission have become a semantic all-encompassing and conflating expression of similarity and shared purpose. 'We have the same vision and mission' has been extrapolated in Kathleen's words to 'we are the same', as the purpose has become the identifier of and driver for the partnership.

A particularity of the family narrative is that it is used also for PUK relations within the UK:

> At [P], we encourage a family atmosphere and acknowledge that without our supporters and volunteers, we couldn't do the work we do. Involving supporters and volunteers will be central in the activities of our new strategy. (PUK Organisational Strategy 2018-2021)

The supporter base has been crucial for PUK over the past 15 years. It began as a small charity which relied heavily on supporters and volunteers to carry out its work. For years, it was the founders' efforts and fundraising activities that brought in the funds made available for PN:

> PUK was very much a family thing. It started with people who were a group of friends; that's the sort of small charity dos that were done to begin with, they were small things. (Elizabeth, PUK)

The notions of familiarity and closeness that are constitutive of small charities, according to Elizabeth, instil a sense of dedication to the purpose of the partnership. The history, the trials and tribulations that the organisations have overcome throughout the duration of the partnership, the inter-individual connections developed with some of the members, and the

personal efforts put into PUK to fundraise for PN in the earlier years, have consolidated the passion for the work carried out by the SDP. The family ties heighten this commitment to the SDP:

> In a way I am related to, sort of, [P] and it's my family, I put in much more work than I could expect from anyone. (Helen, PUK)

The partnership experiences and connections have led Helen to be more passionate and committed to the outcomes of the work her organisation is achieving, which in turn enables increased partnership efficiency and the enactment of mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship as set out in the development agendas (Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, 2010, 2011). This shows how the family narrative is supporting the two facets of the development foci outlined in global development agendas: focusing simultaneously on the values and the efficiency of the partnership as site of constructed relations and interactions.

This first section shows that the family narrative mobilised by PUK describes the partnership as a set of finite and harmonious relationships with strong bonds, similarity in identity, indivisible birthing grounds, common purpose and vision, and special and privileged relations that have been sustained for a long time: a mutual history. These empirical materials illustrate the ways in which the family narrative is mobilised by PUK: PUK and PN as a family, PUK in the UK as a family, PUK with its supporters as a family. In the next section, I introduce another of PUK's key narratives, the 'we are different' narrative.

5.1.1.2 The 'we are different' narrative

'We are different' circulates primarily through PUK and is concerned with differentiating the organisations and the partnership from more traditional development relations. In doing so, it focuses on how much the partnership diverges from other DPs:

> I see [P] as quite different… because we are a smaller organisation and the model that they [PN] work on is quite unusual compared to a lot of development

> organisations. (…) our partner is so powerful and prominent in Nepal, which is quite different to quite a lot of other organisations. I think it's really positive… (Kathleen, PUK)

Kathleen points out PN's size and scope as a differentiating partnership indicator. Usually, DPs have larger organisations based in the Global North, and smaller antennas in the Global South. This partnership indicator symbolises a benchmark against other DPs, establishing the SDP as atypical in the field of international development. Interestingly, organisational development is conflated with an assumption that the partnership contains positive attributes. This claim was regularly drawn upon by PUK participants to argue that the SDP enforces equal relations and is PN-centred.

'We are different' also seeks to differentiate the relations within the SDP against the relations that PN engages in with other development stakeholders:

> I define PA and PUK as partners, but then PN's other donors, I would describe them as donors, not partners. So, I recognise that they [PN] receive funding directly, but I don't really recognise them [the other donors] as partners. Because for me, partners is that you work more closely together than just the donor and receiver. (Simon, PUK)

Simon describes what can be conceptualised as a relational spectrum (partner or donor relations). This spectrum was subsequently expanded upon by other participants who explained how the length of a funding or a project, the relational values of partnerships, and the quality of the relations determine whether a DP should be considered a partner or a donor relation. Thus, development stakeholders are weighed against an informal and subjective nomenclature of relations and practices that define their status and their naming. What strikes me in this quote is the finite and binary nature of the spectrum; Simon defines development stakeholders as either partners (PUK) or donors (others), suggesting there can be no evolution in this status, nor an in-between. I show how this position does not reflect the experiences of PN in section 5.1.2.2.

Oftentimes, the SDP relations serve to legitimise PUK as a partner on the spectrum:

> We do invite PN to come to our conference and to talk about our work, we host them in our homes – when I go over there, I am hosted in people's homes, I'm invited to trustee meetings, to the staff picnic meetings… so it does feel, you know, as if we have quite a strong relationship that goes beyond the transactional transference of resources. (Linda, PUK)

Linda infers that the contrast between donors and partners lies in the added benefits in the relations – and how trust, personal and informal relations, and reciprocity are considered strong determinants of the organisational status and partnership relations. In this quote, individual relations are conflated with partnership relations: the intimacy of hosting, staying in 'people's homes', the partaking in informal meetings, signify for Linda that PUK stands as a partner.

Another key point in assuming the status of partner lies in the commitment and sustainability in the relations and the financial support:

> As long as we've got the money coming in, we'll always fund PN, whereas some of the other donors will give large tranches for a year's project here or a two-year's project there, whereas we aim to be supporting PN for the foreseeable future. (Linda, PUK)

The support provided by PUK to PN constitutes an enabling relationship which differs from constraining relations that PN is engaged in with other development stakeholders. I discuss this further in section 5.1.2.2.

Throughout this section, I have discussed how narratives that circulate within PUK contribute to defining its identity and the relations that it carries out with PN. These narratives are concerned with the specificity of the partnership (size of the organisations); the quality of the relations between the partners (history, exclusivity, values) and the commitment and sustainability in the rapport between the organisations. In the next section, I discuss how narratives are mobilised differently within PN, and how they bring to light sectoral and partnerial issues of power. I demonstrate how, although PN share some narratives with PUK, there is a clear specificity to the articulation of these narratives, their focus and their scope.

146

5.1.2 PN's partnership narratives

5.1.2.1 The 'partnership as a family' narrative

The family narrative is not as apparent in PN as it is in PUK: there are no mentions of it on the PN website or in other organisational resources; and it was not circulating throughout PN during the immersion; it emerged only when I prompted the participants during interviews on PN-PUK relations. The family narrative in PN does have certain similarities with PUK's: for instance, there is some concern with the history and the sustained interactions between the organisations. However, there is also a mention of the distinctiveness of PN-PUK relations compared to other DP relations experienced by PN:

> It was… [PUK's] involvement from the very beginning, in the birth of the organisation (…) That's a different kind of relation; you can't compare that with somebody coming later on, like [citing global development stakeholders] or whoever it is. PUK is going to be there, it has been there for all these years since we started; it's a different kind of relation I think, which cannot be replaced by others, whatever amount of money they come with. It would be much more than PUK, but yeah… that's a special place, I think. (Ram, PN)

'PUK is going to be there, it has been there for all these years since we started' convenes a sense of trust and reliability, and suggests that the quality of the relations with PUK exceeds a monetary and transactional relation ('whatever amount of money [others] come with'). Ram's reference to the quality vs the monetary nature of the relations constitutes an important point of reflection. Indeed, in earlier years, PN's yearly income depended *entirely* on the funds raised by PUK trustees and volunteers, and after the professionalisation of PUK, by the employed staff.

PUK then operated as a conduit for funding, accessing grants and funds that were not available to PN due to its size or geographical location. This has enabled PN to diversify its project and funding portfolio, whilst heightening its profile. However, since the earthquakes that shook Nepal in 2015, PN have become a recognised NGO which developed its own

fundraising strategy and relations with donors, and the organisation has increased its yearly turnover dramatically. This has considerably modified the pecuniary relations that underpin the SDP. PN now experience new development collaborations which are short-term and infused with hierarchical relations and practices. On this basis, the quality of the relations with PUK holds a particular importance in the considerations and appreciation of the partnership.

Echoing Katherine's quote in section 5.1.1.1, the family narrative also draws upon an idea of organisational similarity as constitutive of the partnership:

> PUK and PN are legally different entities but practically the same entities. That's my point of view. I don't regard PUK or PA as different organisations. We are legally different organisations because of the benefits it has, like PN is an independent organisation and PUK is. So that makes us quite powerful, that we are independent, but we are working together and we like working together, that is the best part! (Sajit, PN)

Sajit conceptualises the similarity and the difference between the organisations as beneficial. The notion of beneficial unity and complementarity lies not only in the values, but also in the legal benefits obtained from the organisations' status. Sajit also refers to PN-PUK relations as pleasureful which contrasts starkly with other DPs that PN engage in. I will discuss in more depth the nature of DP relations in subsequent chapters. Whilst the organisational independence and separation can be instrumentalised to serve the purpose of the partnership (increase funding), Sajit insists that the organisations are driven by a similar vision:

> Although we are legally separate entities, we are mentally, vision-wise, we are the same group organisation. (Sajit, PN)

Finally, the family narrative draws on reinforcing notions of siblinghood:

> PUK, and later PA was initiated, they both are equally important, even today. (…) These two are like… very… how do you say? Sister organisation, or something like that; very close ones. They are providing us support in the area where we want to implement our programme. These are unconditional support. (Kiran, PN)

In describing the proximity between both organisations, Kiran uses the expression 'sister organisation'; this reference to the siblinghood was not witnessed in other instances of the research with PN. On the PN website, PUK stand alongside their other partners (totalling 27) and are described as contributors to specific projects – there are no mentions of the family narrative through historical references as there are on PUK website. It is also absent from other key communicational resources, and was not found to circulate across the organisation.

Therefore, I became attentive to the ways and times that the family narrative was drawn upon, and realised this was mostly the case for the PN staff who were in regular contact with PUK staff. PN participants who referred to the family narrative were systematically the ones who interacted with PUK for project design, fundraising, reporting or communication. I hypothesise that privileged relations across the organisations have contributed to the internalisation of the family narrative by PN staff, explaining why the narrative has not circulated beyond this small group.

The narrative of 'the partnership as a family', which circulates via notions of kinship (relations), equality (identity) and shared ideals (purpose), is concerned with defining bonds and close ties between the organisations. It simultaneously unifies the organisations and mobilises towards a shared objective. For PUK, the family narrative has become an identity; however, for PN, it is a describer of DP relations. The narrative is highly dependent on the individual constructions of meaning and inter-individual interactions across both organisations. In the following sub-section, I introduce another of PN's key narratives, the 'some are partners, some are donors' narrative, and explain how this narrative is connected to global frameworks and agendas discussed in Chapter 2.

5.1.2.2   The 'some are partners, some are donors' narrative

I have chosen to differentiate the 'we are different' from the 'some are partners, some are donors' narratives for two reasons. PN engage in 27+ DPs with global development actors, and they are not so much concerned with how PN or the SDP are specific among existing

DPs, but rather, what constitutes an enabling or a constraining relation with development actors.

For PN, the partner/donor narrative is articulated in two distinct ways: in relation to PUK and in relation to other development actors. In relation to PUK, the narrative aligns with PUK's 'we are different', focusing on the benefits of working closely with partners who share a development purpose:

> It's very comfortable working with them [PUK]. They focus on the activities. It's like a family: when we have end of project with staff roll over, instead of letting the staff go, we turn to PUK and consider if we can find some intermediary funding for the staff until another project or donor manifests. They [PUK] have some flexibility, also towards the activities. It gives us confidence to work with flexible organisations. I can make decisions by myself, whereas with other donors, I cannot make any decisions. (Chimini, PN)

Chimini describes a regular occurrence in DPs: relations with donors are time-bound, defined by project charts and budgets. When implementing a project, PN invest into the recruitment and training of engineers, medical practitioners and project staff. Having to let go of their staff at the end of an 18-month or 36-month project represents a huge financial and technical loss for the organisation. Often, the employees' skillsets can be transferred to other projects/regions; therefore, PN is constantly juggling with donors and funding to maintain continuity in project implementation and staffing. However, this dependency on external factors (fundraising, donors, projects) weighs heavily and is heightened when PN deal with development actors who do not acknowledge these operational constraints.

This was an issue that I came across throughout the fieldwork, when the 18-month funding from a major development donor dedicated to a livelihoods project in a remote mountainous region terminated, despite the communities asking for support from PN. The end of the funding meant that six PN staff were out of a job. For days, management meetings were dedicated to examining how these employees might be redeployed over other existing projects whilst awaiting for a new project/funding to start to which they could be transferred. In these instances, PN face stark choices: letting essential and trained staff go, or extracting financial resources from other budget lines that can support the salaries.

150

Chimini refers to PUK as an organisation that enables PN to deal with these sectoral and financial constraints. She uses PUK as an example of more flexible and accommodating practices and relations that diverge from top-down relations with other partners.

In her quote, Chimini also mentions that PUK's flexibility enables her to gain agency in her own work; thereby, she benefits on a personal level from the partnership, gaining confidence in her work. Thus, the partnership is not only enabling at an organisational level, it is also meaningful for the individuals involved.

If the family narrative was about uniting the organisations under the banner of the partnership, and the 'we are different' served to make a distinction between PUK and other development actors, or between the SDP and other DPs, the purpose of the partner/donor narrative is to contrast practices and relations of development actors PN engage with, PUK included:

> Some people come, and then they go; some organisations come and go. We have a good relation, good working relation, good partnership, for that job; and once the job is done, then that is done. [...] In terms of PUK, we have a bit different, that is what we feel, since we share the same ethos, same objectives, same aim... and want to work for the betterment of people in need... (Sang, PN)

Sang draws on the notions of sustainability, commitment, shared vision and mission, and organisational purposes to define the relations, using the relational spectrum articulated by Simon in section 5.1.1.2. As seen with Chimini, the practices and relations that PN entertains with PUK act as a relational benchmark that is applied to other stakeholder relations. Development actors with which PN entertains good working relations sometimes continue funding or support; however, this is an irregular occurrence, and more often than not, PN have to go through competitive application processes to collaborate on new projects with these same stakeholders.

Both Chimini and Sang's quotes illustrate how the partner/donor narrative is mobilised and articulated in much the same way as it was in PUK. This suggests that a dichotomised perspective on partnerships circulates across the partnership, and possibly the sector.

In an attempt to draw out the intricacies of this dichotomisation, I interrogated staff in PN on how the terms donor or partner were attributed to development actors – what the criteria were to determine if they were either one or the other. This led to a number of surprising discussions of which I reproduce excerpts here:

> I think this is a tricky question… [why PN use 'donor' and 'partner'] I don't know if we use that kind of word knowingly, or unknowingly, I don't know. (Ram, PN)

Ram's quote implies that the words might be used interchangeably with little thoughts as to their assumed meaning or the implied differences. However, Bibek's account suggests that there is indeed a differentiated utilisation:

> Previously, most of the organisation [PN] used 'donors'. But the things are a little bit changed. In speaking, we currently say 'donors', but now in writing, in most of the cases, we are using 'partners'. Partners is maybe… more suitable, I think? (…) Donors means… there is some hierarchy, upper-lower, giver-taker, that type of things. Partnership is good. (Bibek, PN)

Bibek's reference to the 'suitability' of the term partner reveals a semantic strategisation on behalf of PN, and a differentiated communicational practice. Throughout management meetings, references were mostly made to 'donors' and the challenges that PN were facing in projects, recruitment, reporting and accountability requirements. In funding applications and on the website, however, the word 'partner' is utilised to define all development collaborators. This strategisation seems to align with development stakeholders wanting to be seen as partners, in an effort to emphasise relational qualities such as equality, mutuality and reciprocity that are non-existent in top-down donor/recipient relations (see discussion in Chapter 2 on development paradigms). If in Ram's quote, terminologies do not appear intentional or strategised, it is the case however in Bibek's. This was clearly revealed in my interview with Sang:

> If you are a partner, you try to work together. If you are a partner, you try to build your partner's capacity as well… (…) [I feel] that some of the organisations might be partners, and some of the organisations are just donors, even though we have to write that we are partners! (Sang, PN)

The act of naming being intrinsically a political one (Contu and Girei, 2014), Global South partners find themselves having to politically choose the partner denomination to satisfy development stakeholders' agendas. The misrepresentation of DP relations and practices that stems therefrom hampers any critical discussion as to how to improve DPs. The terminology shift mentioned previously by Bibek is deeply connected with political and development agendas, which highlights PN's political positioning in the act of naming:

> Some time back, we used to say donors, and the concept of partnership came after the MDGs [goal 8: develop a global partnership for development]. Before that we used to say donors. In our case, this word is used interchangeably, donors, partners, and all that, (…) probably because we didn't talk about partners a lot in this organisation. (Kiran, PN)

If, according to Bibek and Kiran, the agency in the act of naming partnership has been stripped from PN for externalised political motives, how does PN reclaim a sense of power over the relations and practices they engage in with development stakeholders? Sang considers that *partnership* can be approached in different manners:

> PN feel that we take partnership more or less as a functional aspect […] most of the people [in PN] take it as functional, especially because we have many organisations working with PN, so it comes as a function. […] In terms of PUK, […] some of us, we say that we have a better partnership, or a stronger partnership than just a functional partnership. I personally feel we have a better partnership; we don't have only a functional partnership. We have more than that. (Sang, PN)

Sang's quote espouses simultaneously the relational spectrum and the dichotomised conceptualisations of partnership discussed in Chapter 2. There, I discussed Tomlinson's (2005) study on the idealistic/pragmatic perspective on partnership in which she opposed the idealistic version of the partnership discourse (value-centred axiologies that permeate the family narrative) to the pragmatic version, bringing to light issues of power imbalances, trust and inequality. This tension is also picked up by Schaaf (2015) in her work on the rhetoric/reality of partnerships, and how development agendas have shifted the semantics associated with development. Brinkerhoff (2002b) discusses partnership through the

rhetoric or results perspectives, whilst other studies refer to 'genuine' partnerships (Crawford, 2003; 'genuine partnerships' are also discussed in Slater and Bell's 2002 analysis of DFID's 1997's White Paper), or 'good' partnerships (Tomlinson, 2005).

Sang's dichotomised partnerial perspective contrasts a 'strong' partnership with a 'functional' partnership. The notion of 'strong' or 'better' partnership implies for Sang a political commitment to acknowledging structural issues of poverty, exclusion, global social justice and inequality. He expects this political positioning to be shared across the organisations they work with. An organisational commitment allows the bypassing of irregular stakeholder relations (being told one thing and its opposite); but also, to avoid the recurrent impacts of staff turn-over in development organisations which strongly impact DP outcomes and development interventions.

So, returning to the SDP – how do PN consider PUK according to this partner/donor narrative?

> Originally, we really, really felt that we were partners, and then we behaved that way [as partners]; and then, in certain times, they really changed completely into a donor... and, currently, we are partners again. (Sang, PN)

Simon's relation spectrum thus appears not to be rigid, but rather dynamic. The dynamism of the spectrum highlights the constructed and ever-changing nature of development relations.

In this section, I introduced the narratives that circulate throughout the SDP, and how these are designed around ideals and values of togetherness. I showed that these narratives are mobilised by both organisations, across both research contexts. The partnership narratives that circulate throughout the organisations aim to foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Drawing on shared stories and ideals of togetherness, the narratives appear to some extent as homogeneous; however, in analysing PN's accounts of experienced DPs, fractures have appeared. In the following section, I therefore examine *who* articulates these narratives, *when* they are mobilised, and *by whom*.

5.2   The partnership narratives as the 'imaginaries of symbiosis'

Throughout this section, I introduce the *imaginaries of symbiosis* as a heuristic device to examine the constituent tropes that compose each narrative, and interrogate who is currently articulating or mobilising these, and the question: *whom do they serve*[50]?

5.2.1   Engaging with narratives – reflexive insights

As discussed in Chapter 4, the research entailed sustained relations with the research partners over a three-year period, including a 9-month immersion in both organisations (UK and Nepal). Prior to and during the first months spent in both organisations, I relied on two key sources to grasp the DP I was investigating: regular conversations with key research participants; and organisational and communicational resources, such as the websites and reports I could access online. At this point, I did not focus on the partnership narrative *per se*, but was highly attentive to who was conceptualising and mobilising visions of the partnership, and how this was done similarly or differently across the two organisations. The analytical prism changed during the fieldwork and was then 'strengthened' during the data processing.

Before moving onto the discussion, I would like to explain how I became concerned with narratives. In the first months with PUK, I worked in the office from 9 to 5, three days a week, and interacted very closely with the team whilst partaking actively in team meetings, conversations, informal times. The participant observation and authentic participation was concentrated around office routine – studying daily struggles, engagement with funders and supporters, the set-up of fundraising events, and the challenges of drafting funding applications. PUK was focused on securing new funding, increasing organisational memberships and developing novel public engagement events. During my time with PUK, 'funders' and 'donors' were exclusively employed to describe organisations clearly located

---

[50] Foucault (1980) asks this central question around power.

outside the realms of the partnership, reserved to name bilateral agencies or trusts that were financially supporting the charity. PN was always referred to as *the partner*.

Working with PN from 8 to 5, six days a week for two months introduced me to another organisational routine, with 200+ staff across a vast range of projects in remote regions, and funds stemming from 27 partners at the time of the fieldwork. Daily management meetings conducted to review project progress examined financial, technical, physical, and partnerial challenges that stemmed from working in complex terrains. Recurrent issues included staff recruitment, relations with local authorities, engagement with international funders and budgets, to name only a few. Upon arrival in Nepal and starting the work with PN, I became aware of the terminologies that were mobilised to describe partnerial relations. I picked these up during participant observation and authentic participation (meetings, supporting funding applications, reviewing internal and external communications). With PN, the situation appeared a little more complex: the semantics fluctuated across the stakeholders, but also throughout the relation with a specific stakeholder. That meant that a stakeholder might alternate between being a funder, a donor or a partner.

I initially thought of these differentiated narratives as indicative of the type, quality or experience of the relations that PN engage in. Soon, however, I realised I was not clear with myself as to why I considered the semantics to carry more intrinsic meaning in the Nepalese context vs the English context, and why I had noticed them so starkly in Nepal and had not picked them up throughout my time in PUK. I could possibly explain the semantic usage by simplistically inferring that PUK have 'only' PN as a partner and PN have 20+ partners across the world they work with? Or perhaps, because I could fathom PUK having donors but could only envisage PN having partners? There was a tension that lay at *the site of my noticing the narratives*. For this reason, a critical thematic analysis of the narratives brought to light the dissension in articulations, mobilisations and circulations of the narratives throughout the SDP.

In the next section, I introduce the heuristic device entitled the *Imaginaries of Symbiosis* that I devised to analyse the partnership narratives that I have presented in the previous sections.

5.2.2   Introducing the imaginaries of symbiosis

During the engagement with the empirical material, I brought to light a multi-level narrational arrangement. I use the term 'arrangement' to signify both the practices (what) and the strategies (why) of the narrational formation (how it came into existence), mobilisation (who uses it) and circulation (how it moves throughout the partnership). These narratives were captured during the production of the empirical materials with the research partners and in organisational resource analysis. I developed the 'imaginaries of symbiosis' as a heuristic device to assist in the exploration of the organisation and scope of the narratives utilised throughout the SDP. Designing and drawing on a heuristic device to examine the partnership narratives and their effects on the organisations and the sector supports the interpretive and constructivist underpinnings of this research described in Chapter 4.

'Imaginaries of symbiosis' was inspired by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's *modern social imaginaries*. Thereby, he refers to 'the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms; it is carried in images, stories, and legends' (Taylor, 2002, p. 106)[51]. These produce practices and a sense of legitimacy. Employed in sociology, *imaginaries* refers to 'the way a given people imagine their collective social life which enables and at the same time legitimises sense making processes and practices'[52]. According to Taylor (2002), social imaginaries are simultaneously factual, normative and deeply ontological. They are unstructured, tacit, often intangible understandings of the world, systems and structures that we live in, and the interactions resulting therefrom. They are mobilised via symbolic language to circulate and perpetuate.

The imaginaries are displayed at an individual and organisational level, but also in relation to external factors (how the organisations involved in the partnership experienced the

---

[51] I wish to acknowledge that the concept of 'social imaginary' has been circulating for decades and cannot be attributed solely to Taylor. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) refer to a number of imaginaries such as the political imaginary, the democratic imaginary, the egalitarian imaginary, the social imaginary, the radical imaginary, and other historical- or epochal-related imaginaries (for instance, the Jacobin imaginary, the Stalinist imaginary). According to these authors, imaginary is 'a set of symbolic meanings which totalize [...] a certain social order' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p. 190).

[52] Found on the blog http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/makingsciencepublic/2015/04/23/imagining-imaginaries/ consulted on 28/04/2020.

earthquakes for example). Querejazu's (2016) ontological plurality (see Chapter 4) recognises that a variety of imaginaries coexist and collide through all social interactions; this approach to imaginaries allows one to counterbalance ontological hegemony, whereby a specific imaginary becomes the legitimate repertoire of meaning- and sense-making. The notion of imaginaries aligns with the ontological perspective of a social reality constructed by social actors brought together via systems (organisations) and with the extended epistemology that underpins the research and the relations with the research participants and settings (Chapter 4). The term *symbiosis* stands for the synergetic notion of unity, togetherness and alliance.

The concept of imaginaries of symbiosis[53] feeds into the works developed by scholars around the tensions that exist within the naming, practices and problematisation of partnership, and between what is sought from/through a partnership, and what is actually carried out (discussed in Chapter 2). In this rich landscape of critical studies on partnership, imaginaries of symbiosis seek to examine how the ideal of symbiosis is constructed, strategised and negotiated by organisations which engage in a partnership. Through this exploration, I aim to investigate not only the notion of partnership as fraught with tension, but how the aspiration towards partnership has been internalised so that there is no other collaborative means possible and/or imaginable, and how the narratives of partnership have homogenised the way organisations envisage working together.

In the next section, I discuss how imaginaries of symbiosis have defined, organised and limited development relations.

---

[53] Links can be made between imaginaries of symbiosis and Porter's (1995) master metaphors; these 'establish authority and provide a device for making sense, creating order and certainty' (p. 65). Metaphors can take on different and sometimes contradictory forms whilst achieving a similar purpose; their aim is to structure knowledge and action (this is closely related to Foucault's power/knowledge discussed in Chapter 3), resulting in 'the present being disciplined by the past, and the local being integrated within a globally universal rationality of development' (p. 64). However, Porter's (1995) master metaphors are drawn upon solely for the analysis of linguistic texts (p. 65) which is problematic in the case of this study, as I draw predominantly from CPAR and critical ethnographic empirical materials.

In daily organisational life, the imaginaries of symbiosis are 'active', mobilised on a regular basis with a number of stakeholders and within the partnership and the organisations. They are circulating horizontally across the organisations, suggesting that they have been vastly internalised, from trustee to management to lower staff levels. However, these are not mobilised in the same ways across both organisations, and as I have shown in the previous section, there are apparent discrepancies between PUK and PN's mobilisation of these imaginaries, and tensions within these imaginaries that emerge sporadically (I develop the notion of 'ruptured imaginaries' in the next section).

'The partnership as a family' narrative has been circulating since the set-up of the organisations and can be considered 'internal' to the realms of the SDP: it composes the essence of the partnership and the relationships that the organisations entertain with one another. The family narrative appears two-pronged: on the one hand, it is a signifier of organisational complementarity and togetherness, and on the other, it symbolises the individual relations that have been developed as part of the partnership venture. It relies on unifying narratives (siblinghood, equality/horizontality, vision and mission) to produce an overall sense of harmony.

The 'we are different' and the partner/donor narratives result from the changes experienced by the organisations, notably PN's growth, as well as its collaborations with other development stakeholders. 'We are different' is mostly mobilised by PUK with a similar aim as the family narrative (identifier), articulating a sense of difference from other development actors. The SDP history and the sustainable relations are the main narrational strategies. The partner/donor narrative emerged predominantly in PN with a contrasting aim.

PUK participants mobilise imaginaries of unity and difference on a regular basis, both internally (staff meetings, board meetings) and externally (events, communicational devices). They are transmitted via visual and textual means (website and funding applications), and during external and internal events. They have become part of the founding stories that circulate to instigate a sense of belonging to the organisational and partnership project. This was particularly notable during the 2019 PN biannual meeting for

example, as the PUK chair was invited onto a stage in front of 200+ PN staff and recounted the birth of the organisations in his own kitchen (in English). This family narrative exists almost identically on the organisation's website: 'PUK was set up around a kitchen table in [location] by a group of friends with a love for Nepal'[54]. During this allocution, PN was referred to as 'central to the ideology and philosophy of the work' (journal entry 18/04/2019), an organisation of which he 'feels proud to be a part of [its] success' (journal entry 18/04/2019). The personal feelings and beliefs are shared as constitutive of the partnership formation and development. Similar intervention took place during the 2019 PUK annual conference in front of PUK supporters, with identical stories being told, symbolising the long-lastingness of the partnership.

The narratives that circulate across PUK are aligned with the value-focused definition of partnership (Chapter 2). Partnership acts as a strong sectoral mobiliser, therefore, it is not only mobilised between PUK and PN, but also by PUK who draw upon the distinctiveness of this partnership in communication with other development stakeholders. In using the narratives and symbolic languages of partnership, PUK align with global development discourses and agendas that promote partnerships as an efficient and adapted means of collaborating (see Chapter 2). These promote relationships based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship (Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, 2010, 2011).

PN participants mobilise the narratives differently: instead of referring to the similarity or the difference between the organisations, they use them to describe the specificity of the relation between PN and PUK in comparison with other funders. References to PUK relations and practices are of a contrasting nature: for example, the long-term and ongoing relationship; the unrestricted funds; the GP mentoring; the capacity-building and other trainings provided by PUK; the flexibility and contextual understanding/knowledge. The narratives are centred around the roles played by PUK, and how these are individually and organisationally enabling rather than constraining. This was best captured by Chimini in her account of the partnership between PN and PUK. Bibek and Ram's quotes demonstrated to

---

[54] PUK website consulted on 08/06/2020.

what extent the partner/donor narrative is a sectoral construct, deeply tangled with development agendas (MDGs and SDGs). Sang's functionalist analysis of the partnership revealed that the 'stronger' the partnership (in his terms: sustainability, good relations, shared ethos, objectives, and purpose), the better it is considered for the Southern partner.

Despite both organisations forming and mobilising *similar* narratives, this is done in diverging ways, underpinned by different assumptions and expectations and with varying purposes. Indeed, if PUK's circulation of the narratives shows how these inform and shape the organisational identity and communicational outputs, PN's mobilisation of the three narratives is meant for a more descriptive or assessing purpose (the quality of the relations with partners). PN do not depend on the narratives in the same ways as PUK do to define the partnership or the organisational aim – this is possibly due to the fact that PUK have only PN as a partner when PN have 27+ existing DPs. The strategic mobilisation of terminologies, concepts and symbolic language by PN highlights the manoeuvres that are developed to simultaneously negotiate organisational ethics, sectoral relations and practices, and global frameworks.

The diagram below illustrates the ways in which the imaginaries of symbiosis interact, and the associated assumptions they draw upon:

The imaginaries of symbiosis

Siblingship

History

Relational values (mutuality, reciprocity, trust)

Vision and mission

'We are a family'

'We are different'

'Some are donors, some are partners'

Temporalities

Equality / Horizontality

Commitment sustainability

Relational qualities (flexibility, empowering)

Unifying narratives

Differentiating narratives

Contrasting narratives

Figure 6: The partnership narratives as the imaginaries of symbiosis

These narratives – whilst dominant – have evolved over the course of time, and are highly porous to external events. Sang's contemplation over PUK alternating between donors and partners; or Elizabeth's mention of the partnership being enforced by a growing sense of organisational equality; or Kiran's reference to the role of global agendas in the rise of partnership illustrate the shifting and in-progress nature of these constructed narratives.

The imaginaries of symbiosis draw on a symbolic language composed of scripts, references, legends, and anecdotes (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, p. 8). The symbolic language refers to the history of the partnership, notably how it was created, how it evolved, the roles played by the founders and the long-term commitment between PUK and PN (family narrative); and the relations entertained in the partnership (partner/donor narrative). It has become scripted and prescriptive over time towards mobilising adherence and a sense of belonging across the organisations and the partnership.

5.2.4   Critical insights into the imaginaries of symbiosis

The aim of the imaginaries of symbiosis is to encourage organisational adherence, loyalty and belonging. Adherence can be broken down into two categories: internal adherence from the staff and trustees; and external adherence from the donors and larger public. The internal adherence is multi-layered, achieved through organisational and partnership loyalty; pride in the organisational belonging; and attachment to the outcomes of the work that is carried out as part of the partnership vision and mission. The adherence process is conveyed simultaneously through the 'we are a family' and 'we are different' discourses. The loyalty, pride and attachment combined have contributed to a sense of cohesion and fidelity to the partnership project, but have also prevented crucial questions from arising, that would possibly disrupt the adherence mechanism (developed in section 5.2). External adherence is expected from external stakeholders who would want to collaborate with this specific partnership in amongst the plethora of top-down partnerships in international development.

Throughout the data production and fieldwork, I clearly apprehended the social imaginaries as contextually, organisationally, generationally and practically informed and shaped. I found that variations of these imaginaries were displayed across the study contexts and organisations, with different imaginaries mobilised depending on the status of the participants, their age or their professional level. Imaginaries were also found to interact significantly, with some participants from both settings entertaining privileged relations and developing their own imaginaries[55].

Behind the terminology of donor and partner lies a question of labels, of values, of resources, of relations and practices which were exposed during the data processing; as seen with Kiran's quote, the semantics are deeply entangled in global discourses and trends of development. When I reviewed major development shifts in Chapter 2, I discussed how practices and foci of development have shifted throughout the decades, to reflect economic, political and cultural changes. However, most of these discussions and shifts were instigated

---

[55] I acknowledge here that the variations in imaginaries could be the object of a study in itself, and hope to continue this analysis in subsequent works.

by Global North development actors, and little consideration has ever been given to the experiences and practices of Global South stakeholders. These quotes allow a better understanding of how Global South partners strategically mobilise terminologies, and the different meanings associated with each one of these terminologies. Thereby, I reveal how these specific labels are conceptualised by Global South partners on both an operational and a philosophical level.

The imaginaries of symbiosis display clear issues of voice (who is determining what this relation is?) and representation (Global South development stakeholders have no choice as to how they are named, whereas Global North development actors impose naming). The act of naming is deeply political (Contu and Girei, 2014), as is the act of *reclaiming meaning* in the name. Global North development stakeholders encourage harmonising semantics and thereby negate power issues in unequal development relations. The imaginaries of symbiosis highlight to what extent partnerial denominations are deeply situated, and located in practices and relations of privilege that define the types and modalities of collaboration aligned with axiologies defined by development stakeholders abiding by neoliberal paradigms.

As Global South development actors are stripped of their choice in naming the relations they engage in, other dichotomisations emerge to reinstate notions of relational quality. In reclaiming a differentiated appellation for PN's development collaborators ('functional' vs 'strong'), Sang seeks epistemic justice in a sector that actively denies voices from the South from arising or problematising practices and relations.

If these first sections have proposed a rather homogeneous reading of the imaginaries of symbiosis, the next section is dedicated to the 'ruptures' to the imaginaries of symbiosis, or how these dominant narratives are challenged at multiple levels. I focus on three critical tensions that are not accounted for in the imaginaries of symbiosis. These were expressed by participants during interviews and emerged from participant observation and authentic participation.

5.3 Rupturing the imaginaries of symbiosis

5.3.1 Ruptures in the family narrative

I propose here three threads to explore ruptures in the family narrative: I start off with Julie's personal experience; then I move onto a quote from Elizabeth on PUK's position towards PN and PA; and I finish with Laura's critical examination of the development sector as a whole.

The first quote was shared by Julie who discusses her experience of the partnership as a family and how this was challenging for her at an individual level.

> I was very much seen […] as part of the family, the core of the family, right there […], living there, making the joint decisions, being a part of it, in the family… (…)
>
> During that time [a tension between PUK and PN], I was… seen as… became outside the family. […] And I saw… that… being in the family wasn't actually that helpful… it wasn't going to take P to where it is now. […] I had to get out of the family. (Julie, PUK)

Julie was involved in PUK and the partnership for a number of years with close ties across PUK and PN. Her account reveals how her belonging to the family was crafted through the values associated with the family narrative – togetherness (living there), closeness (making joint decisions), kinship (being a part of it). She reflects on the relational transformations that she experienced personally in her role and position within PUK. Julie can only fathom two personal positions (being in or being out of the family). She describes her relation to the family as an externalised belonging ('I was seen as part of the family' / 'I was seen as outside the family'): her experience of the partnership as a family was personally shaped by how she was perceived by other members of the partnership. Julie's quotes reveal how the overarching narratives are contradicted at an individual level, and how this contests the overarching ideal of the partnership as a family.

When Julie reports that 'being in the family wasn't actually that helpful', she contrasts the ideal of the partnership as a family against the evolution of the partnership as a social

165

project. She suggests that for the partnership and the organisations to grow, 'the family' does not constitute an appropriate means of relations. She implies that 'being outside the family' (thus, not so closely involved in the relationships of the family) would provide better opportunities for the organisation and the partnership to achieve their aims. This excerpt echoes the dichotomised conceptualisation of partnership; according to her, effectiveness cannot be achieved via the value-oriented partnership model.

In her quotes, Julie broaches on the role of inter-individual dynamics that are mostly intangible, unstructured, and vastly circumstantial. The interpersonal relational level is not taken into account in organisational and partnerial policies or processes; therefore, issues arising have often not been dealt with through critical discussions. The fact that other members assigned her – and subsequently denied her – a sense of organisational belonging contrasts with the partnership as a harmonious and inclusive space. I witnessed this in other instances of the organisational immersion with PUK, notably during board meetings when dissensus was crudely met, and institutional belonging challenged. The assumption that underlines the family narrative requires an unquestioned following and adherence to 'the social project'. This board level tension is heightened due to a clear division (developed in section 5.3).

The second quote that I have chosen to illustrate tensions in relation to the family narrative comes from Elizabeth. Here, she reflects on how the SDP relations have evolved over time:

> Hopefully, PUK has accepted that it's a partnership in Nepal; and it's a partnership, it's no longer father and son, or whatever. It's a partnership, they are equal to us in every way. And the same with PA now, because they were very much just a little offspring, but they are big business. (Elizabeth, PUK)

As seen in the family narrative, the onus lies on the expected horizontality of the organisations in the DP. When Elizabeth utilises family terminologies ('father and son', 'offspring'), these contrast with the narrative focusing on the organisational horizontality underpinned by the siblinghood reference ('sister organisations'). In employing the expression 'father and son' and 'offspring', Elizabeth infers that power imbalances used to exist between PUK, PN and PA. Her quote suggests that these power imbalances were rectified only recently, because of the organisations' growth:

166

It's become very much like the children who've grown up [PN and PA], and they are all part of it, they all have their own importance and role to play, and there isn't really one that's more than another, really. PA has started very small, but really has got some fantastic grants now! (Elizabeth, PUK)

In the case of PA, organisational growth ('big business') came around as they recently secured a multi-year funding from a major donor. In PN's case, the organisational growth relates to the increase in financial income, in team staff, in activity and in scope. These are believed to have been escalating since 2015, as a 'result' of the earthquakes which brought new funding and donors to Nepal, and 'enabled' PN to diversify its projects.

For both PA and PN, organisational growth is considered through very specific and historically situated events which act as rites of passage: in overcoming the hurdles of development, the organisations have become equal partners. The ritualisation of this growth can be conceptualised as symbolic acts (Ybema *et al.*, 2009). Symbolic language does not align with symbolic acts: the fact that equality is considered as gained circumstantially and causally rather than instituted *de facto* implies that organisational equality in the partnership is a discontinuous relational construct (if PA does not renew a 'fantastic grant'; if PN reverts to a smaller organisation, etc). Therefore, if the partnership relations *have become* egalitarian, then there is a risk that partnership relations might revert to being *non-egalitarian*, which questions the assumption that there is a possible equality within the concept of partnership (discussed in Chapter 2).

I wish to finalise this section with a quote which echoes the question I have just highlighted on 'is equality possible at all in DPs?':

We can have all these values and these nice words, and talk about how it's a family, and an exchange of equals and all of these things. We live in a world that disproves that, and trying to deny that is also wrong. The whole reason that these organisations are set up is to address, in some small ways, these gross injustices in the world. By denying that those gross injustices exist in the power dynamics within our microcosm, I think is just being a bit blind to it… (Laura, development stakeholder)

Laura considers the 'family' narrative as a means to disguise the deeper and more problematic issues of development as an ideology and a set of practices and policies which are deeply fraught with imbalances (Escobar, 2005; Sachs, 2010). In her view, the family narrative, through a focus on the 'exchange of equals', overlooks issues of power that exist within and between micro and macro levels.

Throughout this section, I have shown how the family narrative is challenged and debunked at individual, organisational and sectoral levels. In the next section, I present two complementary counter-narratives that have gained precedence over the past years.

5.3.2 Disruption to the equality claim: examining dependency chains

I identified two complementary counter-narratives, formulated as 'they still need us' and 'they have changed so much'. Both are articulated by a faction of PUK management; they were not found to be mobilised by PN. In this section, I focus on 'they still need us'.

'They still need us' symbolises the dependency chain identified and maintained by PUK → PN, with PN assumed to depend on PUK to survive (and thrive), granting PUK a superior status in the relationship. I found that this narrative was mostly mobilised with signifiers ranging from 'we're still essential', 'we still have a role', 'we still have a purpose'. It was a reminiscent narrative mobilised to reaffirm PUK's historical role and status in changing scenarios. This dependency chain is unpacked in the following quote:

> People [...] are saying 'look at PN, it's got all these other funders, what are we going to do?' But they'll still need us, they'll still need us! Even though it's not as much, proportionally, it's not as much as their total need, they still need it! You know, somebody who is giving them money today, they may not do it tomorrow... but we might be able to still do it, you know? (Elizabeth, PUK)

With PN now financially soaring above $3 million/year and engaged in many DPs and donor relations, the organisation is seen as less dependent on PUK. This poses a problem for some of PUK board members, as with a prospective break in the dependency chain lures independence. 'They still need us' reinstates the idea of PUK superiority. What was striking

throughout the fieldwork and interactions with the research partners in the UK is that this narrative has become quasi-undisputed[56] and now permeates board discussions and other internal meetings. Amanda helped me grasp the reasons behind this narrative:

> I think there were two things: one was basically a lack of trust in PN, so [PUK] were basically thinking 'we don't want to be dependent on one partner entirely, we'd rather be a bit diverse so that if something happens with PN, we have other partners...' That was the more, sort of frontline argument... I do think that there was an undercurrent of argument that we want PUK to grow and become a huge international organisation and for that we need other partners, because you can't be an international organisation working only in Nepal... (Amanda, PUK)

I wish to provide a historical insight into a crucial turn in the relations between PUK and PN. The shift in the relations stems from two specific moments of the partnership. In a first instance, participants mentioned the DFID grant secured by PUK, and how it modified the relations between PUK and PN 'from two partners together to a funder and an implementing partner' (Julie, PUK). PUK was asked to request documents and reports from the 'downstream partner' (PN) (Simon, PUK) to satisfy DFID's funding processes, which instilled new types of accountable relationships and judicial responsibilities. This structured a downward chain of command and formalised relations of power between PUK and PN. Laura remembers how the DFID grant signified a huge change in the partnerial relations:

> We were going for money from DFID, and as soon as you go for money from DFID, you have to become a mini-DFID. And suddenly, we're not this [P] family anymore, suddenly we're the ones saying 'your quarter 2 report is not on time'; or we're saying 'there's not enough transparency in it'. And suddenly we're over-bearing and we've created this relationship where PUK is unhappy with their partners on the ground. (Laura, development partner)

---

[56] 'Undisputed' does not infer here that all PUK board members agree with this counter-narrative. Some PUK board member participants mentioned that 'you have to choose your battle'; strategically deciding not to challenge this specific counter-narrative gave them scope to confront other assertions they deemed problematic. This could be explained by the fact that this counter-narrative has been in circulation throughout PUK for a number of years, and that disputes are prioritised for more recently emerged counter-narratives.

Laura suggests that the shift in the relations correlates with the dissolution of the family narrative. The chain of command that PUK found itself in in the relation with DFID was reproduced with PN, structuring a downward DFID→PUK→PN power relation (see Chapter 3).

Secondly, the breakdown point was connected to the earthquakes which brought around significant change for both organisations. For PUK, the earthquakes signified an increase in media attention, private donations, information requests, liaising with donors, support to PN. In Nepal, the earthquakes brought devastation in Kathmandu and remote regions across the country, thereby dramatically modifying the development landscape overnight. Development actors had to amend their activities to deliver humanitarian aid with little to no material resources available. PN's good credentials and recognised development work attracted donors who wished to fund emergency relief and recovery projects. PN found itself having to manage new donor relations, new funds, new reporting requirements, whilst recruiting employees with skillsets adapted to the emergency activities, sourcing materials and repatriating their own staff blocked in remote regions. This was a highly stressful time which hampered the communications with PUK:

> [PUK] got a ton of money overnight. (…) They really needed to be responsible and account for that money, and no one in Nepal was in an accounting space, right? [PN] couldn't send budgets back, they didn't know where it was going to be spent, everyone had just been spending it on emergency things in this emergency situation, and that caused some problems, and that really broke down trust. It really broke down trust between PUK and PN. (Laura, development partner)

Competing priorities coupled with an emergency situation on both sides meant that PUK and PN could not support each other and fulfil the expectations of their partner. For PUK, tensions crystallised at board and management levels, which led to a breakdown in trust, resulting in a questioning of the partnership as a whole:

> [PUK] trustees started feeling 'oh we don't really know what is going on in Nepal and we're not sure if it's safe and we're not sure if we shouldn't be looking for other partners to send all this money to', which of course upset PN… quite significantly! So suddenly there was a conflict there. (Amanda, PUK)

The breakdown of trust was exacerbated in the UK by a conflict which divided (and still divides) the board. What appears in the UK as a breakdown of trust was experienced differently in Nepal:

> The people in PN were 'hey, give us time, we can't do this now' [reporting], they were hoping for more solidarity from PUK. (…) [PN were] under this immense reporting burden, from these big names (…). So then they are there scrambling to write reports, to get their accounts in order, to try to appease these big donors. And PUK [knocks on the table] 'hey there, we haven't heard from you in 6 months, we just gave you £100,000 and no one has done anything or said anything, where has the money gone?'. And it was like 'PUK, give us a break!!! Don't get on at us, we are doing stuff down here, it's an emergency'. (Laura, development partner)

For PN, it was a breakdown in solidarity and empathy that occurred over the months following the earthquakes. The stable and reliable partner PUK was suddenly lacking in the relational qualities that made the collaboration between PUK and PN special:

> The old partners were suddenly causing extra problems, rather than helping PN deal with all this new stuff, they were suddenly actually making life more difficult. (Amanda, PUK)

Participants recounting this phase of the partnership life recognised the complexity of the situation for both organisations, acknowledging that neither organisation was prepared, experienced or knowledgeable about working in such conditions. The breakdown in the relations (trust on the one side, solidarity on the other) resides in this complex panorama of new partnerial relations being developed overnight in a rapidly evolving context, to respond to needs deemed urgent (this analysis can be applied to both the impact of the DFID grant and the earthquakes). Whatever conflict or breakdown that existed at the time has levelled out with no (apparent) animosity, but has resulted in an important shift in the relations between the partners, and still dampens partnership relations today. However, if these tensions were in effect exacerbated by these two key moments, Helen believes that the partnership challenges might go back further:

171

> There is something with the kind of dependency chains that have not evolved since the beginning of the story of these organisations, where PN was dependent on PUK, and for some (…) this is still an idea that is maintained and that is kept. And, what I have seen is that it's not allowing to recognise the agency and the tremendous development of PN. (Helen, PN)

The static partnership label does not create space for relational changes, and the imaginaries of symbiosis can only be conceptualised in the conditions in which they emerged. PN organisational changes (development, growth etc.) are seen as hampering the symbiosis, as shown by clear othering narratives outlined throughout this section. In the next section, I discuss a final rupture in the imaginaries of symbiosis, namely that 'they have changed so much'.

5.3.3   Partnership expansion or strategising the future

The second counter-narrative I introduce stems from the breakdown in relations discussed above, and from PN's continuous growth since the earthquakes (increase in donors, funds, projects and scope). It was expressed by several participants during interviews and mobilised repeatedly throughout the fieldwork with PUK.

This counter-narrative is currently serving PUK in the articulation of a new development strategy of partnerial expansion. Initially, the expansion was reactive, resulting from the breakdown of trust experienced during the earthquakes. It symbolised the end of the honeymoon period during which both organisations held clear complementary roles. The breakdown stimulated a desire to develop other partnerships with new organisations that PUK would be able to trust (as they used to PN). But therein lies a second and less-discussed opportunity:

> From a risk perspective, I think it's good just not to have one partner. But also, I do believe that it will allow us to attract new donors, reach new audiences, have a larger scale. (Simon, PUK)

172

The partnership expansion is expected to also satisfy the desire of some PUK trustees to become a bigger development player on the international scale (mentioned previously by Amanda). It is also a means to secure new funding and resources for PUK whilst increasing its geographies of development.

The partnership expansion narrative was amended and strategised by the new PUK director, who arrived in 2017. Instead of seeking a distinct departure from the existing narrative, the new director has emphasised the strength of the existing partnership (localisation, history, status, experience) in the process of designing and developing new partnerships. It was inserted in the PUK 2018-2021 Strategy as follows:

Strategic Aim Two:

New Implementing Partners

'Grow and develop by supporting new implementing partners outside of Nepal. We believe that by adding to our core partner of PN and the countries we work in, we will reach new audiences allowing us to increase our financial support to our core partner and our first strategic aim'.

It was introduced to PN as follows: 'why don't you help us expand, and you could support the capacity building of new partners drawing from your experience and your expertise'. In asking for PN to support its expansion project, PUK is relying on the family narrative promoting adherence to the partnership project. The family and expansion narratives *combined* are serving PUK in elaborating a project that will benefit it more than it will serve PN. Indeed, in the way it is currently framed, PN is expected to carry out many 'capacity building' activities with new partners across different regional contexts, to model(ise) their organisational development, and to support new partners in achieving similar success. However, for PUK, the partnership narrative and expansion can be capitalised upon in relations with donors and in funding bids; it can also allow it to target new grants destined to currently inaccessible development geographies or issues – essentially 'keeping PUK in business'.

This is a critical point of tensions for PUK – how to guarantee organisational perpetuation. Amanda explains this issue as follows:

> PUK is entirely dependent on PN for its fundraising and for its staff and for its continuing work. Because if that partnership collapses, if PN does something diabolical, then PUK would then have no partner, and they wouldn't be able to continue the projects that they have contracted for with bigger donors; and they would lose their fundraising base to a large extent because the donors wouldn't trust a new partner in the same way as they trust this ongoing relationship… so, PUK as an organisation would collapse if PN disappeared for their purposes… (Amanda, PUK)

This quote illustrates an 'imaginary of fracture' that is very active for part of the PUK board. The expansion is central to PUK's daily life as I witnessed throughout the fieldwork: during board meetings, mentions of and appeals for new plausible partners are regular; the board has put in place a working group dedicated to 'organisational development and partners relations'; a framework for developing new partnerships outlines the 'criteria for assessing new partners'; a partnership or merger matrix aims to estimate risks and opportunities associated with either. Despite there being no specific funds associated with the expansion agenda, part of the board actively engages in panning out the different outcomes of expansion. The board divisiveness and the current development climate foster a sense of urgency; I observed numerous tense interactions on this topic, and it was the issue referred to most recurrently throughout interviews with PUK participants, most of whom considered the partnership expansion to be key to the future and survival of PUK (I will discuss this in subsequent chapters).

However, Amanda's quote also highlights power issues in the expansion strategy: whilst PUK held financial control over PN (dependency), this issue was not central to the organisation's agenda. A notion of lost control permeates PUK's imaginary of fracture. This leads me to contend that asymmetrical relations, when they do not operate 'in favour' of the Northern partner, are considered problematic, and the remedy sought by PUK is to reproduce what once existed so as to comfort the organisational role and status. The relational shift symbolises not only a breakdown in trust on PUK's side, but has brought around an incapable projection forward with only PN as a partner. The symbolic values of the partnership are

clouded by the reality of the competitive development landscape in which development actors have to show adaptability, performance and growth – and for PUK, this can only exist through expansion.

For PN, 'they still need us', 'they have changed so much', and the subsequent partnership expansion project, are met with curiosity and questions:

> Why [would we] say to PUK: 'we don't need you'? (…) If they are after the cause, what we are doing in Nepal together, then there is more need for PUK; but if they are there just there to set up another organisation or help to set up another organisation, then they might be right. They have to be clear on that one, whether they are here to set up a new organisation (…), or they are there to help the needy people.

For this PN senior manager, the question is not about the dependency between both organisations, but rather about the cause that should be pursued in the name of the partnership. Throughout the fieldwork with PN, I came to realise this partnership expansion is experienced in dramatically different ways across the organisations. PN envisage PUK's expansion agenda as an organisational strategy which reciprocates PN's own expansion and growth. Reciprocity and complementarity are the key considerations for PN, with focus on how this might come to serve the overall partnership project rather than any organisational project.

> PN can't say anything to PUK if they want to have other partners or not… especially when in PN itself, we have more than 20-25 donors, and so… we are expanding that every day, trying to expand every day. So PUK might want to build another one to implement something else. (Sang, PN)

Working closely with PN, I found little emotional attachment to the partnership expansion desired and planned by PUK; rather, there is a lack of communication between the organisations as to why this appears to be so essential to PUK. The levels of strategisation that reside in the expansion project (PUK growth, PUK perpetuation, PUK guarantee) have evaded the discussions between both organisations, resulting in a lack of understanding on PN's side.

As illustrated throughout this section, the two narratives (family and partner/donor) are both complementary and contrasting/opposing. They simultaneously signify the permanence *and* the rupture of the relationship, arguing for its continuity and its change at the same time. The fact that both narratives are mostly articulated by PUK illustrates how the division has been strongly (im)mobilised around notions of control, ownership and accountability.

5.3.4   Discussion on the ruptures

In the preceding section, I have discussed the limitations and the points of rupture within the existing narratives, showing how the ideals of togetherness are being challenged through counter-narratives and the emergence of new aspirations for the partnership. The assumption of indivisibility renders impossible critical insights on the conditions and the experiences of the family togetherness, and what falls 'outside of the symbiosis'. Thereby, issues emerge which have been overcast by the culturally, socially, politically and historically accepted narratives which permeate the development sector and the partnerships.

The rupturing narratives are tailored to include the 'non-acceptable' perspectives which compromise the imaginaries of symbiosis. I found that these circulate throughout the organisations – primordially PUK – and culminated in the 'imaginary of fracture'. The ruptures exist in connection to specific external factors (the earthquakes, the DFID funding) and internal challenges (PUK's divided board, the breakdown in trust), but reveal more deeply entrenched issues of power, control and dependency. However, these critiques exist on the periphery of the unitarian narrative of the partnership.

According to Foucault (1980) 'relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role' (p. 142). Throughout the partnership, the imaginaries of symbiosis condition the types of relations that are acceptable throughout the partnership narratives (family, siblinghood), excluding therefrom any discussion on power throughout the partnership; and they are conditioned by global agendas articulating the ways in which DPs should exist.

Julie's personal experience, as well as the breakdown in trust and in solidarity, and the issues of dependency and control, indicate that the rupturing of the imaginaries of symbiosis is multi-dimensional. These issues are not dealt with through appropriate channels or mechanisms and culminate in silencing, miscommunication and tensions that become institutionalised. This might be explained by the fact that: 'We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything' (Foucault, 1971, p. 8). The partnership, whilst so deeply embedded in assumptions of reciprocity, closeness and intimacy, has never prepared for or accommodated inter-personal and intra-organisational tensions.

Drawing from the heuristic device allows to examine where issues of power emerge, and how the rupturing of the imaginaries of symbiosis can be explored as a *site of power* which reveals unequal relations throughout the partnership. Analysing the sites of narrational rupture – of which the ruptures to the family narrative, the equality claims and the partnership expansion (see section 5.3.2 and 5.3.3) – brought to light the ways in which the co-construction of ideals of kinship, equality, shared ideal and horizontality contribute to obscuring power asymmetries, problematic assumptions and stereotypical beliefs, and specific events which have exacerbated competing priorities and relationship breakdowns.

Conclusion

In order to address my RQ1 – **How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of international development?** – I was interested in how the imaginaries of symbiosis enforce a homogeneous sense of unity and togetherness. To this end, I examined conceptualisations, experiences, relations, and representations of the partnership to reveal how these differed from the constructed assumption of a symbiotic relation.

As seen in this chapter, partnerial narratives shape and confine the ways in which the relations and the practices are conceptualised and enacted. I showed how divergent narratives reflected differentiated conceptualisations and assumptions of the partnership;

critically exploring new narratives and examining the ways in which these might offer space and opportunities to recalibrate the DP relations and the practices could enable new partnerial modalities to emerge.

As I have shown throughout the chapter, these narratives are mostly articulated and mobilised by PUK towards legitimising and sustaining a collective aspiration towards unity, loyalty and adherence, which is conveyed via facts, norms and stories. PN's circulating narratives focus mostly on the partnership outcome as social project, and how unequal relations hamper the achievement of this project. The term 'family', via its constituent tropes of togetherness, harmony and closeness, neutralises a critical analysis of power imbalances occurring within the SDP. A particular attention to development policy as 'semiotically mediated, that is, (…) culturally embedded and transacted, involving the production and systematization of particular languages, images, rhetorics' (Kapoor, 2008, p. 19) allows one to better grasp partnerships as political processes which entail dominant knowledges, institutionalised practices and strategies.

This leads me to a concluding point on partnerships in development. For this I draw inspiration from Dar and Cooke (2008) and their critical examination of organisations and the managerial turn in the development sector. They question whether the onus put on *organisations* as the 'primary or default social arrangement within which management is located' (p. 5) – and the fact that these are privileged instead of other modes of social arrangement – should not be critically re-examined. The authors contend that focusing on 'organisations' has become a 'discursive trick' (p. 5), as it enables to blend different social arrangements together behind a generic appellation, thus rendering their differentiation (and possibly, I would entertain, their analysis) impossible. Elaborating on this argument, I wonder if this interrogation could be extrapolated to DPs, insomuch as the designation of DP actually appears to cover a number of collaborative dynamics in ID; therefore, I propose DPs should be critically approached as a discursive trick of ID.

The investigation into the imaginaries of symbiosis and their ruptures using a TIA clearly exposes the schism between organisational and individual perspectives on DPs, and highlights the necessity for critical spaces for discussion and reflection on the terms and motivations of partnering. Thereby, it is possible to exhibit the deeply situated and constructed nature of partnerships in development.

CHAPTER 6: PRODUCTION AND EFFECTS OF POWER ASYMMETRIES IN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to RQ2:

How are power asymmetries produced in the development sector, and how do these influence the modalities, relations and practices of DPs?

This chapter begins with four vignettes that portray the partnership between PN and different development stakeholders, as well as between PN and PUK. The examples that illustrate each vignette were events experienced during the fieldwork which I observed and logged as part of the research; or they were retold by the participants during interviews, management meetings or organisational immersion. For the purpose of the narration, I associate each of these events to a specific organisation; however, the practices and relations described were oftentimes found in other DPs.

Subsequently, the thematic analysis examines the ways in which the power asymmetries described within each vignette counter the foundations of what DPs ought to be (illustrated in Figure 1, p. 48). I propose a power analysis drawing from Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power introduced in Chapter 3 and from postcolonial theories to reveal and explore different power relations discussed in the vignettes.

6.1 An empirical analysis of power in DPs

Throughout this first section, I have chosen to present four vignettes which illustrate a partnerial relation between PN and various different development stakeholders. I have purposefully chosen four different organisations to show how power is produced within and across different partnerial relations, *whatever* the organisational type. The section is built around examples experienced during my time with PUK and PN, drawn from the empirical materials produced during the fieldwork (interviews, participant observation, authentic participation and fieldwork diary).

6.1.1 Meryl – A private development group

Meryl[57] are a consultancy group contracted by a bilateral development agency which act as an intermediary organisation on behalf of an international development aid agency located in the Global North. They were contracted by the aid agency to oversee and manage national partners selected as project implementors in Nepal. Meryl, with competencies in engineering, management and development, oversee the work that PN, as well as other national partners and researchers, carry out in the context of a multi-year programme. This programme is aimed at supporting the most vulnerable in regions affected by the 2015 earthquakes.

Throughout the fieldwork, I attended two meetings between Meryl and PN. I focus here on the second meeting conducted in the offices of Meryl which brought together a number of national development partners involved in the project, as well as two national researchers working with the partners to analyse data informing the project. The aim of the meeting was

---

[57] Meryl is a pseudonym. I have changed the organisation's name to ensure confidentiality, protect the protagonists involved in the partnership, and to avoid impacting the progression of the relations between PN and Meryl. Also, the power asymmetries I discuss throughout the vignette are not specific to Meryl. Rather, they are symptomatic of the relational practices of a number of development stakeholders I observed throughout the fieldwork, and discussed at length with participants. All following names (individuals and organisations) have been pseudonymised in line with the ethics discussed in Chapter 4.

to discuss data collected over the course of three months by all the development partners, and how to proceed further with programme implementation.

In the earlier months of the programme, Meryl had asked national partners to carry out a sample survey of the target regions to assess the number of vulnerable households. This was to be done through sampling and asking village representatives the number of vulnerable individuals living in their communities. Upon data analysis, the researchers contracted by Meryl agreed that taking a sample approach was not the most adequate method. By then however, national partners had proceeded with sample surveys. Meryl's lack of expertise in the domain of research and vulnerability/needs assessment caused a lack of method harmonisation across the data collection phase. Not only could the data not be summed up across the selected project municipalities – leading to clear discrepancies in the summary of evidence – but the researchers also realised that the concept of vulnerability had not been understood similarly by all the national partners involved in the data collection. This meant that the report results were *de facto* invalid, as the final evidence produced underrepresented the number of vulnerable individuals across the project region.

This is illustrative of how donor top-down decision-making are a frequent occurrence in DPs, as reported in this quote:

> [Meryl representative] has to call the shots, because he's the staff of the donor organisation. He doesn't ask [national partners] for advice, he says 'this is what we are doing'.

'This is what we are doing' punctuated the rest of the meeting, and clearly impacted the relations between Meryl and PN. PN was initially missioned to work with four *gaunpalinkas*[58] totalling 73,000+ individuals, in 16,000+ households. During the course of the meeting, Meryl increased the project zone by two more *gaunpalinkas*, with no additional funding or timing to compensate for the workload expansion. A 50% increase in the programme geographies and beneficiary numbers meant PN had to recruit more staff, a lengthy and often complex process of arduous negotiation with local government officials. They also had

---

[58] *Gaunpalinka* stands for 'rural municipality' in Nepali, the 'newly formed lower administrative division in Nepal. This administrative division was established in 2017, and replaced the existing village development committees.' (Found on [Wikipedia](#))

to provide new budget estimations to make the programme work across six palinkas instead of four.

In the notes taken after the meeting with Meryl, I raised the following:

> What does this say of how Meryl consider PN? How they deal with partnerships? Rather than asking how PN might need supporting, or what the expected challenges might be, or how to mitigate them? Bringing in a new party ['we'll find someone else to do it'] might be detrimental to PN, insomuch as it would duplicate the organisations working on that specific component of the project, weakening the harmonisation and possibly putting two national development organisations in competition… (diary entry 15/05/2019)

A PN staff member explained that issues with Meryl had been ongoing since inception; they were unpredictable, changing the conditions and requirements from one month to another. According to several participants, Meryl had repeatedly added work which did not fit under the initial scope of the project. The group did not account for project delays caused by their own processes or those of the international aid agency. They also failed to facilitate communications across the three levels (international aid agency, Meryl and PN) or across the national partners. This led PN to consider Meryl an 'extra layer' who 'sit back and let others do the work…' (diary entry 10/05/2019, statement by a PN staff). Since outset, PN had been compelled to rush their activities (census, local staff training, reporting, recruitment) to compensate for the donors' failings.

What most struck me throughout this meeting was the use of competition as an incentive to push PN to agree to unsatisfactory partnerial terms. Throughout the preliminary data collection phase, PN had gone above and beyond to represent the lived experiences of the populations located in the target communities. They had sought to improve the methodological approach imposed by Meryl for the data collection and analysis, arguing that the processes defined by Meryl would contribute to rendering more invisible already misrepresented vulnerabilities. They produced an extensive report with findings and suggested actions going beyond the scope of the project. Throughout, they applied their integrative approach to showcase intersecting challenges for rural communities.

However, despite their ethical and methodological commitment, PN had to acquiesce to implementation conditions that would most surely jeopardise the quality of the project outcome and the relations with the communities. Meryl's responded to the legitimate concern (a 50%+ non-agreed upon increase in the geography and workload imposed on PN) by drawing on the argument of methodological and technical expertise as a strategic narrative that contributes to instilling unrealistic and asymmetrical working conditions. If PN were initially recruited for their expertise and experience, Meryl has since reclaimed the expertise assertion for their own interest. For every one of these issues, PN remains the last to be informed with the least negotiation influence.

In other situations, PN would hope that international development stakeholders take a stance to support them in dealing with sectoral or contextual challenges. Throughout the course of the project implementation with Meryl, local governing bodies attempted to skew the recruitment processes and insert their own staff. PN staff explained how Meryl could have interacted with the *gaunpalinkas* directly and supported PN's processes, thereby defusing tensions which compromised the project as a whole. In proceeding as such, development stakeholders did not support PN or the stringent governance processes that they had implemented, and were not playing key roles such as a bridge or a facilitator or an intermediary with the international aid agency, the SWC or local governing bodies which could have benefitted PN.

In this vignette, I have introduced the relations between a private sector organisation working on behalf of a global aid agency, and their national partner PN. I have shown how issues of expertise and decision-making were tied up in power imbalances, which led to asymmetrical and competitive relations between the organisations of the DP. In the following vignette, I present the DP between an INGO national office based in Nepal and PN.

6.1.2 GlobeHealing – The national antenna of an INGO

GlobeHealing is an international NGO specialising in humanitarian medical intervention, which has also branched out to development work. For the past 40 years, its activities have focused on medical provision and social care with vulnerable and excluded populations in Europe and the Global South. Its central offices are located in the Global North, with local independent antennas across five continents. In Nepal, GlobeHealing works on issues relating to health and environment. The INGO has partnered with PN since 2017.

At the beginning of the partnership, GlobeHealing encouraged freedom and initiative from PN. Soon, however, the relations between GlobeHealing and PN became tense, and grievances crystallised around three specific issues, namely organisational roles, competition on visibility and naming dynamics, which I clearly saw play out whilst observing a steering committee meeting. Below I analyse each of them in turn.

The first issue concerns organisational roles within the partnership: GlobeHealing is used to working with local partners which follow its guidance. This was explained to me by the national representative when they described another of their partnerships in Nepal:

> The partner did what we told them to do: GlobeHealing was the expert, we gave them the roadmap, and they did what was asked: there was no issue. (GlobeHealing national representative)

In this quote, organisational complementarity is structured and fixed by the INGO: GlobeHealing, as the expert, design and develop the project, fund the interventions, and rely on a local partner for the activities' implementation[59]. Nepali NGOs are seen as 'service providers', 'field actors' or 'implementing partners' (expressions drawn from the interviews):

---

[59] In proceeding in this manner, GlobeHealing comply with national guidelines that request all INGOs partner with local organisations for the implementation of their interventions in Nepal (see section 2.4.3 on the SWC).

> In Nepal, there are many NGOs, many, many, many, that work as service providers: tomorrow, there is a financial opportunity because there is a possible partnership with an INGO, or a call, etc. They recruit staff, the project ends, they fire everyone, no questions asked. (…) 'There's money, off we go, there's no money, we don't care, we reduce staff, and it's ok, we wait for the next opportunity'. (GlobeHealing national representative)

The assumptions behind this quote are that Nepali NGOs enter partnerships for financial reasons only, as passive recipients of external aid, awaiting funding opportunities, with no ethical drive or development goals (Baaz, 2005; Kenny, 2008). However, GlobeHealing's experience with PN did not adhere to this partnerial scenario. GlobeHealing's aim was to focus on community empowerment through community mobilisation and development, whereas PN considered that community empowerment could only happen if and when primary medical needs have been addressed through health provision and training. These two visions diverge considerably, and caused significant frustration for both parties. For the INGO's national representative, the conflict that ensued can be explained as follows:

> GlobeHealing is a medical organisation that developed a partnership with a medical organisation [PN]. And we think here that maybe that wasn't a good strategy. Because where we're at is that they have skills, but we do too, in the same area. (…) it's clearly a mismatch… (GlobeHealing national representative)

GlobeHealing considers that organisational complementarity – and more largely partnerships – can occur only if and when they hold knowledges and roles that diverge from their national partners'. PN's expertise and skillsets in a similar sector have led to GlobeHealing considering the interaction a competitive one. Initially, the 'coordinator came to us and said "we want a strong partner, we want a partner that really has its own input"' (interview quote, PN staff). But since then, the INGO has reverted to top-down decision-making, micro-management leadership, and imposed heavy reporting requirements. For a PN staff member, GlobeHealing acts as a 'schizophrenic parent with mixed messages about collaboration' (diary entry 05/04/2019). The diverging visions have caused GlobeHealing to grow increasingly displeased with the programme impact. This was heightened by a 2018 mini-evaluation for which 'the results were bad' (GlobeHealing national representative). The

negative outcomes of the programme have been entirely attributed to PN's 'approach'. The INGO considers PN as 'annoying' and 'complicated' to work with (as voiced by the GlobeHealing national representative).

The tensions have infused other dimensions of the partnership, which brings us to the second issue: competition on visibility. PN, as the frontline organisation, have developed privileged relations with the target communities. In providing healthcare and trainings as part of the programme, they gained respect because 'usually other organisations move on, but PN are still around' (beneficiary comment made to a PN staff, discussed during the management meeting, diary entry 10/05/2019). Whilst community beneficiaries have a positive reception towards PN, most are not aware of GlobeHealing or its role in the programme. GlobeHealing has held PN responsible for their lack of visibility in the community. As seen in the following quote, PN experience this with other donors:

> Donors consider that they have given money to PN. (…) The donors want to be seen and recognised. (…) Most of the time, the activities are carried out in the communities, and PN is very visible in the communities; the donors complain that PN is focused on their visibility. Sometimes, they blame PN unnecessarily! (Chimini, PN)

Issues of competing visibility have led to power imbalances in DPs, where donor organisations render the work of their national partners less visible for their own benefit (see further sections for other examples). This was seen with GlobeHealing who proceeded to remove a beneficiary's positive feedback about PN in a documentary made about the programme. On their website, GlobeHealing describe the work carried out by 'their teams in Nepal' with vulnerable communities, and present the findings of a major research report developed in collaboration with PN as theirs. The misrepresentation and omission of PN in communicational outputs cannot simply be explained – nor justified, nor excused – by the conflictual relations between the organisations[60].

The third issue relates to tensions in naming (see the partner/donor spectrum in Chapter 5). As discussed previously, partnership semantics are laden with expected values, relations and practices of mutuality, trust and reciprocity (Tomlinson, 2005; Cornwall and Eade, 2010;

---

[60] I do not suggest there is a linear or causal relation between the tensions experienced within the DP and issues on competing visibility. Rather, I outline how such practices can contribute to crystallising tensions.

Contu and Girei, 2014; Schaaf, 2015). The aspiration for partnership has been enforced in global development agendas such as the MDGs and the SDGs (Chapter 2) as the right way of collaborating in development. This has led Northern development stakeholders to prefer the denomination of partner over that of donor:

> [PN] said 'GlobeHealing is the most complicated donor we have', and I replied 'we are not a donor'. (…) Possibly PN in general, consider us a donor because we don't let them loose, (…) and I think it really annoys them. Because indeed we are not a donor, and we will not be a donor. (GlobeHealing national representative)

This quote reflects how organisational roles in DPs are conflated with organisational identities and partnerial relations. Issues around the naming of development stakeholders came up many times throughout the fieldwork. Participants explained that most donors want to be referred to as partners, and want to be considered the 'only one': this implies PN being "always available, being always responsive, having short reporting periods" (interview quote).

The act of naming reflects the *quality* and the *modalities* of the partnerial relations (I develop these points further in Figure 7 entitled PN's conceptualisation of donors and partners, p. 257). It is also a highly political process (Tomlinson, 2005; Contu and Girei, 2014) which has been instrumentalised so that Southern partners are not granted the choice and freedom as to how they designate the organisations they collaborate with. PN considering GlobeHealing as a donor is in no part representative of an organisational 'culture'; rather, it is symptomatic of power asymmetries across DPs. Within the naming of GlobeHealing as a donor lies a denunciation of relational modalities that do not satisfy PN.

Participants repeatedly discussed lack of transparency from donors and how this brought around questions for PN; lack of transparency has come to symbolise the blurriness around budget allocation and expenditure, and relative organisational costs. As seen in Chapter 2, INGOs cannot legally implement development projects in Nepal, and rely on national partners to do so. The role of GlobeHealing and other such INGOs is to oversee the project, and their main activities consist of project steering and monitoring, impact assessment, and

reporting to their HQ. Thus, GlobeHealing rely heavily on PN[61] to justify their presence in Nepal, and benefit from this project to ensure their permanence. However:

> If you see the total cost of the project, (…) more than half [goes to] GlobeHealing. (…) They spend it on the salaries, on the house rent, all of those things… (…) We have 2-4-6… 7… 8… we have 10 people here to implement the project, and they have… [counting and naming] 6 people for monitoring and ensuring… (…) So this is not very efficient project, in fact. (Kiran, PN)

The tendency towards over-costing development projects in favour of a national INGO antenna was found across multiple development stakeholders during the fieldwork.

The power asymmetries observed between PN, national offices and international HQ have complexified the relations and practices of DPs. In this vignette, I discussed issues of naming, competition, visibility and transparency within the DP, and how GlobeHealing as an intermediary organisation holds power of action and inaction that impacts negatively upon PN. In the following vignette, I examine the DP between PN and an INGO network member.

6.1.3 Poverty & Development – A network member organisation

Poverty & Development is a faith-based INGO located in the Global North. It has become a network of 150+ member organisations spread across five continents which intervene in Global South and European contexts. The INGO provides humanitarian and post-humanitarian relief, and development projects geared towards vulnerable groups. A European member organisation of Poverty & Development started funding reconstruction projects with PN soon after the 2015 earthquakes, and has since collaborated on three different projects with PN.

One of the field trips I accompanied in Nepal was to a remote mountainous region which had been strongly affected by the 2015 earthquakes, and the focus of much of PN's

---

[61] At the time of the fieldwork, the partnership with PN was GlobeHealing's only one in Nepal.

reconstruction work. Meetings with the community leader, district officials and PN's frontline staff were organised to discuss the end of a 20-month livelihood project implemented by PN and funded by Poverty & Development. The project had initially been designed as a 15-month intervention, which had subsequently been extended. Its aim was to ensure nutritional diversity within the community through vegetable and mushroom cultivation and poultry rearing; and to support villagers in acquiring new technical skillsets to increase economic development within the community.

During these meetings, requests were made repeatedly for the project to be continued. PN representatives had to explain that because donor funding was terminating, and despite needs remaining unmet, they had to withdraw. Short-term funding is a recurrent practice in DPs and poses real issues for PN. As explained:

> Project interventions are still very often very short term, sometimes even as short as a year, or maybe 3 years… 5 years is already long for a project! (…) We are setting up projects that [have all] these expectations and that will never fulfil [them]. (Susan, development partner)

Susan mentioned that any projects funded for such short time-frames are "not serious" as they do not realistically represent the complexity of social change. According to her, development interventions are destined to fail because they do not offer the means, conditions or time to achieve the aims that they set out for themselves. PN are caught in this irremediable web of partnerships and stakes which cannot be reconciled, symbolised by a tendency towards projectification (see Chapter 2).

Upon return from the visit, PN management organised a meeting with the donors to discuss the project termination. Prior to the meeting, Poverty & Development informed some funds might be released for a follow-up, and PN was mandated to prepare a logframe outlining the goals for such an extension. However, as the meeting started, it appeared that Poverty & Development's national representative had decided on different avenues for the project extension, including new location, scope and priorities. Throughout the meeting, the conversation was entirely steered by Poverty & Development's representative who drew from his 'expertise of India' (diary entry 16/05/2019), arguing that both contexts were

similar and implying that he knew better than PN staff what ought to be done in Nepal. This is a common trend among donors:

> They tend to pretend that they know everything, so they prescribe the things in the way they think, and that doesn't work here. For some reason, they are expats, they know some things in the different contexts, but they don't let things go in a way they should be doing here, based on local experience. (Kiran, PN)

Such a meeting was not an isolated incidence for PN staff. Multiple accounts of this type emerged during informal discussions and management meetings, and I observed these on several occasions throughout the fieldwork. The diary notes that follow reveal how difficult this meeting was:

> What came after this was just totally absurd, with [PN programme manager] having to present the now obsolete logframe that he had prepared for the meeting, but which was of course no longer relevant because of the discussion that had taken place, and having to listen to [Poverty & Development national representative] boast, asking him to amend all the points that he had prepared. It was honestly really disturbing to witness this. (…) [PN programme manager] was gently pushing back, pushing his own arguments, making a case for them, using examples and experience to insist on some points… it was overall a tedious exercise in diplomacy, negotiation and invisible submission. (Diary entry 16/05/2019)

The meeting lasted two hours during which Poverty & Development entirely redesigned the logframe, with little discussion with PN on the changes. Pushback against the new terms were met with laughs and shrugs by the national representative. As seen with Meryl, PN often feel that there is little to no room for negotiation in project design as there is the risk donors will 'close the door' or 'stop talking with PN'. PN staff consider that they have to take it upon themselves to keep DPs going, despite the symbolic violence of the relations with donors. Indeed, because PN act as a representative of the funders with the local populations, and of the local populations with the funders, PN staff experience a complex positioning:

> It's actually really, really, really difficult to be a leader in a national NGO in the country you're born in, because of this end result of donor-implementor relationships where,

> no matter how experienced and competent and skilled you are, in the relationship, you are considered the junior one, with less knowledge, less experience, less expertise… (…) That's actually a (…) fairly rare skill, to be able to, you know, deal with the donors and their prejudice on behalf of your beneficiaries and not get cynical, and still retain your enthusiasm about really doing the work that you set out to do… (…) there is a certain amount of work called 'friction loss' in all this stress of dealing with the donors.

'Friction loss' relates to the many layers and instances of epistemic violence and injustice experienced by PN staff in their relations with international donors, who draw on problematic assumptions such as technical, methodological, and contextual expertise to enforce relations of superiority. It is a key node of power and domination in the relations between PN and most of their funders, and was clearly apparent in this meeting.

Another way in which these issues of power manifested was through organisational amalgamation. Throughout the meeting, Poverty & Development's national representative continuously employed the expression 'our team', referring to the work carried out by Poverty & Development and PN. In doing so roles, responsibilities, work and levels of power of both organisations were conflated, inferring these were equally distributed across the partnership, and that both 'teams' had equal say in the direction of the project. 'We' and 'our' are semantic uses that contribute to hiding and erasing donor-partner relationships, hinting at reciprocal relations when they are in fact highly infused with asymmetrical power. This leads to questioning who has the voice in project design? How are decisions made and negotiated? And how PN can point at problematic development practices when the donor is controlling and pushing their own agenda *whilst* using an overarching narrative 'this is for you', or 'we are doing this for you', or 'this is for your benefit' (comments made by Poverty & Development representative, diary entry 16/05/2019)?

The meeting ended with Poverty & Development dramatically increasing the scale of the project, forcing PN to leverage additional funding from other donors. The strategy behind such an increase relates to reaping maximum benefits from a large-scale project, with less monitoring and steering responsibilities, as these are divided across multiple donors. For PN, however, this means an upsurge in work, as they have to 'sell' the development project to prospective funders, manage multiple budgets, report to more stakeholders, and

experience even more friction loss. Their role in the project becomes even more occulted when renowned INGOs are competing for visibility.

In this vignette, I explained how short-term funding concurrently impacts the relations that PN entertain with the communities and with the donors. PN's commitment to the communities means staff experience friction loss and have to accept less than satisfactory inter-individual and organisational relations. To be able to continue working with and for remote communities, PN have to agree to organisational conflation and lesser visibility. In the following vignette, I next discuss power asymmetries observed during the fieldwork between PN and PUK.

6.1.4   PUK and PN – Examining the SDP

In Chapter 5, I examined partnership narratives – conceptualised as the imaginaries of symbiosis – as sites of power. However, the narratives are not the only location where power is produced within DPs. During the fieldwork, I observed practices of appropriation of PN's work by PUK. By 'appropriation', I mean the Northern partner taking ownership or credit for the work carried out by the Southern partner. Many of PUK's written texts and communicational outputs do not specify which organisation is carrying out the activities in Nepal. On PUK's website[62], the welcome page reads: 'PUK – Changing lives in Nepal'; others outline 'our projects in Nepal'; references are made to 'the districts P works in'; project-related pages mention 'PUK is delivering a five-year project' or 'PUK completed a three-year project', or 'PUK has been working with the Nepal Network for…', or 'By 2021, P will have changed the lives of [number] marginalised and vulnerable children'. For a small minority of trustees, this causes some discomfort:

---

[62] These pages were accessed on 09/06/2020.

> PUK tends to feather its cap with all PN's projects, while only funding... well... I can't remember how much, but it's way below 50% now. (...) It's been normal in the beginnings, but it's become more and more of a strange thing for me, because (...) most of the operation is PN, and PN has a huge network of donors which is a matter of pride for me, but it doesn't seem to be for PUK. (Helen, PUK)

Analysing organisational roles within the partnership shows that PUK (usually) identifies, applies for and funnels money to PN which manages, implements and delivers the activities. In recent years, PUK have located funding that it could not apply for (because of the size of the organisation or the targeted geography), and communicated these to PN for them to apply directly. Most of the times, roles are clearly defined within the partnership, but these are often not reflected as such in communicational means. The website illustrates how PUK either take full ownership of the projects carried out in Nepal, or omit to situate the role of PN in design, development and implementation (as seen in section 6.1.2).

Misrepresentation is furthered in funding bids, where PUK refer to PN as their 'implementing partner' (DFID Funding application, 2019). Describing PN in this way contributes to simplifying their role to technical delivery rather than strategic co-designers. It also omits to account for PN's capacity in fundraising and project/partnership development. Using terminologies such as 'implementing partners' to design PN suggests that the other stakeholders play bigger roles. This stance stems from the first years of the partnership, when PUK were primary funders for PN. However, dramatic changes have occurred in the past years (see Chapters 3 and 5), and PUK now struggle to reach their yearly target of £95,000 to PN, whilst PN's yearly turn over exceeds £2,15 million.

> I wish some people in the [PUK] trustee board would understand that that is where we are different, in a way. We haven't actually got any projects as such, and even PA have projects. (...) Initially we funded two villages or three villages or whatever, but now [funding] is used as and when and where. (Elizabeth, PUK)

Both Helen's and Elizabeth's quotes reveal the unease expressed by a minority of the Northern trustees. Organisational conflation under the generic 'P' family narrative, and the ownership claim that results from this amalgamation, misrepresent the role of PN in the DP, and the complexity of working in the Nepalese context. It also silences PN's growth in recent

years. This appropriation and misrepresentation are symptomatic of a more problematic perspective:

> I think, one of the successes of this [partnership], is that PN is sustainable now, as you say. That is the success of PUK in my view. (William, PUK)

Some trustees consider that PN's growth or current success ought to be attributed entirely to PUK. The assumption that PN is sustainable because of the partnership with PUK, and that it is the success of PUK, reveals other sites of conflation. Drawing from this assumption, some PUK actors consider they know better what PN need in terms of trainings and support:

> There was shortfall of capacity in the management, not because of lack of skills but because of lack of time… and the suggestion was made that somebody could come from the UK and train the PN management… and that suggestion was never taken up, because you know, training just takes more time out of people's time! And [PN] were struggling anyway to get everything done. And that was when PUK trustees say 'well, they don't even want to take our help!' (Amanda, PUK)

This quote illustrates the level of conditionality there is in the relationship: PN *ought* to accept PUK's advice and technical support, with the implication that PUK inherently possess these, and that PN do not. However, when PN articulate their own needs or resistances to PUK's agenda, there is a fall-back: this is most apparent when PN express their motivations for the SDP, which is met with disapproval from PUK:

> It's a kind of standard accusation of [PUK trustee members] towards the PN leadership that they just want: 'just give us the money!'. Which is absolutely true, yeah!!! That's the only thing really that PN wants from PUK!!! (…) That's really the main thing that they need, is resources…

Overlooking or reprobating Southern partners' dependency on Northern organisations to access restricted funding follows the same logic as not allowing them to name the relations that they engage in (partners vs donors). Issues of representation and voice permeate the SDP relations: organisational conflation, conditional support and dismissing the realities behind the motivations to enter DPs silence PN's agency both *within* and *outside* its

partnership with PUK. A striking example of this lies in the conflict experienced after the earthquakes (see Chapter 5) when PUK wanted to be involved in ascertaining the activities to be implemented post- earthquakes, because:

> Half the trustee board pretty much, felt that the expertise and the decision-making power lies with PUK and PN should be much more controlled by PUK and listen to what PUK is suggesting, and do projects that PUK are interested in. (Amanda, PUK)

When PUK received a large amount of private financial donations to support earthquake relief, the breakdown in trust led to questioning if PN were appropriate partners and if 'maybe there are other ways in which we can spend this money?' (interview quote). PUK held back on the money transfer and conditionalised it to PN sending a project proposal: 'tell me what you are going to do with it, what the budget is, and [we] will release the money' (interview quote). This account reveals that stereotypes about expertise and decision-making generated more than organisational tensions. The distrust towards PN exposed the power held by PUK in withholding funding destined to Nepal. Arguments around accountability – PN not being sufficiently accountable towards PUK – were not reciprocated when PUK caused significant loss to the funding acquired through the earthquake appeal. Recognising the unequal weight of the partnership on PN is central to the improvement of the relations between both organisations.

In this section, I have explored how issues of ownership, misrepresentation and conditioned support have led to power asymmetries within the SDP, which is conceptualised by many of its protagonists as a "good partnership" (see Chapter 5). I examined partnerial relations and practices between PN and Meryl, GlobeHealing, Poverty & Development, the SWC and PUK; choosing these organisations was not to point at *specific* issues between *specific* partners, but rather to highlight the multiple levels and layers where power relations are produced and maintained in DPs. Most of the examples associated with these development stakeholders emerged throughout the fieldwork with other organisations that I have not specifically identified in this chapter. The point is to highlight how diverse power relations and practices are within the sector, and also to reveal that these are intrinsic to *all* partnerships, and not limited to only dysfunctional collaborations. Some partnerial relations were indeed complicated and infused with tension and conflict, as was the case with

GlobeHealing for instance. But others seemed to be satisfactory for both organisations involved – and still displayed problematic occurrences of power and asymmetrical decision-making.

6.2   A multifaceted analysis of power asymmetries

In this section, I develop a pluralist analysis of the power asymmetries found in DPs – some of which have been highlighted in the previous vignettes. I start with Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power introduced in Chapter 3; and end with a postcolonial examination of power in DPs and the development sector more widely.

6.2.1   Using Barnett and Duvall's (2005) power taxonomy

In this section, I draw from Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power to analyse the power asymmetries found in DPs. I focus specifically on three forms of power described by the authors: compulsory power, institutional power and structural power.

6.2.1.1   *Compulsory power through direct control and influence*

Compulsory power deals with the relations where the (material, symbolic or normative) resources or actions of one actor are controlled or influenced by another; this can be accomplished through threats, sanctions, shaming/blaming or by 'shap[ing] directly the circumstances or actions of another' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 49), be this intentional or unintentional. This type of power draws from Dahl (1957) and Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) dimensional power forms (see Chapter 3). According to Barnett and Duvall (2005), 'compulsory power is best understood from the perspective of the recipient, not the deliverer, of the direct action' (p. 50) – for this reason, in this section, I focus on PN's experiences of compulsory power in DPs.

196

Firstly, I return to section 6.1.1, where I described the DP between Meryl and PN. I highlighted the tense meeting where PN attempted to challenge the changes imposed by Meryl in project intervention. PN staff expressed concern that the addition to their project segment would irremediably impair the successful outcomes of the project. The response from Meryl's representative was 'oh well, we'll find someone else to do it' (diary entry 15/05/2019). This threat made against PN hints at the fact that Meryl consider PN as replaceable and that the partnerial requirements defined by Meryl upon PN are non-negotiable. Following the meeting, Kiran explained to me how PN had experienced the interaction and the threat made by the representative:

> Meryl are asking for expanse in two more palinkas, which is… near to impossible, but if we say no, then… there is a risk that they will stop talking to us, so we have to adjust ourselves and try to see how we can get into that… That is always a challenge. If we say no, it's like closing the door… (Kiran, PN)

In accepting the additional palinkas, PN were well aware that the new terms were problematic *for them* ('near to impossible'), and that it would fall *on them* to 'adjust' in order to 'keep the door open', despite the plausible complications that would ensue. In this quote, Kiran highlights how the communication between Meryl and PN is conditional, and that the partnership can only exist if PN agree and do not question or challenge.

Thus, despite there not being any action made following the representative's words, the threat carried many effects and operated as a relationship modifier. PN sought to 'adjust [themselves]' in order to fulfil the unilateral conditions imposed by Meryl, in part also because, within this threat, they anticipated further sanctions such as Meryl ceasing to interact with them, or Meryl 'closing the door'. The fact that a covert threat of the kind enunciated by Meryl's representative carries such effects on PN's actions hints at the ongoing and regular 'adjustments' PN have to make in the DPs they engage in. In this instance, Meryl directly shaped the behaviour and actions of PN and influenced the resources allocated by PN to the project delivery as they had to recruit additional staff and assign more staff time to ensure timely progress. Symbolically, the threat contributed to entrenching Meryl's domination of the project implementation and the DP whilst

simultaneously curtailing PN's capacity and willingness to oppose unfair partnership conditions.

Another example of this form of power goes back to 2018, when PN experienced a conflict with the SWC. An alleged complaint emanating from a remote project municipality was sent to the SWC about PN, which led to an investigation of PN's work. Concerns grew for the organisation as for the SWC to enforce considerable sanctions – such as closing an NGO's account, and refusing their yearly registration – would mean all funding being blocked, rendering PN incapable of continuing its activities, and possibly losing all their donors. PN's own inquiry into the affair, and notably communications with the supposed dissatisfied municipality, revealed a very different story. The complaint letter had been forged, and the municipality leaders were in no way discontent with the project implementation – on the contrary, they were hoping the collaboration with PN might be expanded. The affair was subsequently resolved with the intervention of local and national support.

However, the damage done to PN's reputation and the time needed in dealing with the affair considerably impacted the NGO. PN made the decision to communicate widely to its donors and partners; thereby, they sought support, but also to voice concerns about practices that might be occurring to other national development actors. In the email sent, they asked donors to intervene favourably with the SWC to hasten the resolution of this situation. There was a limited reaction to this communication, and donors who had been involved with PN for years *decided* not to communicate or position themselves in support for PN. This absence of reaction highlights the extent to which the SWC holds power over the development sector in Nepal and influenced the non-action of the donors who did not wish to compromise their own position in Nepal. It also sheds light on the underlying assumptions that, *perhaps*, PN had indeed deserved this complaint, or had somewhere erred, thereby shaming the organisation and shaping the behaviour of donors (see section 6.2.2 for more analysis on this point). Since 2018, the situation has changed, and relations with the SWC have improved:

> The recent evaluation done by the SWC and the development office [states] our organisation is very much transparent in the implementation and the staff recruitment and everything. They were [saying] (…): 'It is an exemplary organisation and health programme, health education, livelihood, integrated programme… what PN is running – that should be followed by other organisations as well'. (Devna, PN)

The relational evolution between PN and the SWC does not conceal ongoing issues of power, corruption and collusion in the development sector, nor the key role played by the SWC in controlling national development practices.

The compulsory power held by Meryl and the SWC did not necessitate 'more' than a covert threat or a forged complaint to carry long-lasting and profound effects on sectoral practices and relations: compulsory power is therefore a key dimension of power to analyse donor-partner relations. I demonstrated throughout this section how these threats shaped PN's responses in project implementation, notably through 'adjustments' intended to avoid prospective retaliative measures. Despite these measures barely being laid out and not acted upon, they have deep effects on the Southern partners, who come to accept partnerial conditions that detrimentally affect their financial and human resources.

6.2.1.2   Institutional power: the role of 'middle organisations' and their international offices

Institutional power refers to the indirect control carried out by 'the formal and informal institutions that mediate between A and B, as A, working through the rules and procedures that define those institutions, guides, steers, and constrains the actions or nonactions and conditions of existence of others' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 51).

I found throughout the time working with PN that DPs are ultimately conceptualised between what I label 'middle organisations'. Meryl, GlobeHealing and Poverty & Development (and many more during the fieldwork) operate as intermediary organisations that work *on behalf* of larger development consortiums or organisations or even governments (and in some ways, PN are working *on behalf* of the target communities). Thus, power issues in DPs are produced between middle organisations which replicate macro

asymmetries at a meso level. As a middle organisation, PN are seen interchangeably as donors by the communities or as 'recipients' by the donors (as with GlobeHealing, Poverty & Development and PUK). This 'in-betweenness' contributes to the organisational conflation that I analysed throughout the vignettes.

For this section, I revert back to the vignette on GlobeHealing (section 6.1.2), and the lack of transparency in how the INGO interacts with PN. During the meeting, the national representative repeatedly pushed for PN to move forward with planned activities, calling PN out on adherence to timelines and agreed upon commitments. However, when PN brought forward concerns relating to contractual and calendar agreements, the responses from the GlobeHealing representative were consistently: 'we will have to refer back to the main office on this point' – the main office being located in Europe.

Laughingly, PN staff told me that when development stakeholders don't like PN's questions, they routinely mention that they need to escalate queries to headquarters (HQ). As Kiran put it after one of these meetings: 'if they have to ask everything to HQ, then why are they needed?' Chimini experiences this in multiple stakeholder relations:

> Most of the time, the decisions are not happening in the time they should be happening… [GlobeHealing and other development actors] never realise that they are the ones hindering the work. When the contract ends in February, but they have blocked the budget or the reporting, and they are reporting to the HQ and the HQ has to come back to them… it takes time. And then they say the partnership doesn't work! (Chimini, PN)

The communicational modalities between INGO national and central offices are kept from PN, but cause crucial delays in programme progression. Once national offices receive a reply, PN cannot negotiate as the decision has come 'from above' and acts as an order, rigidifying organisational hierarchies. Tensions in communication, and not being sure *if* and *how* discussions between national antennas and central offices occur cause distrust on PN's side. The domination of a spatially distant institution enforces power through their national antenna which becomes an 'instrument of institutional power' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 51); however, the 'instrument' can also use the HQ as an excuse to not comply with their partners' demands.

In a similar way, institutional power operates at another more hidden level, when INGOs do not recognise PN as a legitimate advocate or voice for the remote communities they interact with on a daily basis:

> There should be this partnership between the donors and the implementing agents to work together *for* the target community, and quite often it feels as if the donor is kind of […] seeing PN as the beneficiary. (PN staff)

Modifying the ways in which INGOs interact with their local partners, considering them as 'beneficiaries', diffuses PN's role in development intervention and renders their expertise and contextual understanding silent. This is in part due to the rigid positions that all actors hold in this form of power: HQ exercises power over GlobeHealing which then exercises power over PN – in this form of power, other development actors such as the communities, other donors or other partners are non-existent.

As argued by Barnett and Duvall, 'analyses of institutional power necessarily consider the decisions that were not made […] because of institutional arrangements that limit some opportunities and bias directions, particularly of collective action' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 52). This corresponds to Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) non-decision-making which can be strategised to curtail the freedom, reactiveness and margins of manoeuvre of partners (discussed in Chapter 3). In delaying their responses to PN's concerns and questions, GlobeHealing and other national INGO antennas invalidate their partners as legitimate development stakeholders whose professional queries should be acknowledged and addressed.

Likewise, the ranking of middle organisations working with Nepali NGOs strongly affects the manner in which DPs evolve. In section 6.1.1, I presented Meryl and discussed issues of micromanagement, pressuring and competition to force PN to accept unfavourable working conditions. This was in part due to the international development aid agency's (the employer) annual review of Meryl's work. In 2018, the group had been poorly ranked (B), reflecting the international agency's dissatisfaction with the group's timelines in programme implementation. In 2019, however, following a field visit from the international agency, Meryl were ranked A+, and were encouraged to 'Keep the fieldwork momentum going' (Director quote, diary entry 15/05/2019). This ranking had an impact on the group's actions:

in order to keep a 'positive' scoring, the focus was on fulfilling the aid agency's indicators rather than the quality of the partnership with local organisations. In this relation, PN were considered as replaceable, dispensable, but also a strategic pawn in development relations between Meryl and the international aid agency. Thus, competition for international funding and ranking are two ways in which hierarchies are enforced in development. The main argument which is drawn upon to enforce these hierarchies is to ensure organisational perpetuity.

Institutional power outsources decision-making and renders direct and accountable partnership relations impossible. In both examples cited throughout this section, PN found themselves at the mercy of externalised structures which constrained their actions (and those of the middle organisations they deal with).

6.2.1.3   Structural power shaping capacities and resources

Structural power 'concerns the determination of social capacities and interests' and 'shapes the fates and conditions of existence of actors' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 53). It is the form of power most aligned with Lukes' (2005) power conceptualisation, in that it refers to *the mechanisms and processes that shape other's desires and aspirations* (see section 3.1.3). Structural power also deals with 'the structure of global capitalism [and how it] substantially determines the capacities and resources of actors' (p. 54): the connection between structural power and capitalism was most apparent in the example I describe below.

To examine how structural power is produced within the workings of the development sector, I draw from a compelling example that relates to the EU funding entitled *Civil Society Organisations and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Country Based Support Scheme*, advertised for Nepal by the European Commission. Exceptionally, Nepali organisations were authorised to apply directly for the funding without having to rely on international counterparts as is often the case, and PN decided to present a project.

However, the stringent application mechanisms for an EU call exclude many organisations from the process[63], and only a few Nepali organisations were entitled to apply:

> Application processes continue to be inaccessible for [grassroot movements], but additionally they are unnecessarily complicated, they're lengthy, they rely on recommendations from other [grassroot organisations] that don't have the capacity to fill out a 14-question form, and they don't have those resources. (Uma Mishra-Newberry, Women's March Global[64])[65]

This fund was also open for other stakeholders, which meant that INGOs with local antennas in Nepal *involved in partnerships with PN* were also applying. During an interview with an INGO national representative, this funding was presented as a means to secure financial resources and the right to continue working in Nepal (see section 2.4.3). For PN however, receiving such a funding *directly* would signify not losing money to a Northern partner, and heightening their profile and the impact of their work. Differentiated interests in the funding have led partnering organisations to work against each other, as expressed by this development stakeholder:

> We did something I find sucks, totally in emergency. (…) I think we fit the frame of the call, we put in some buzzwords… (…) What's going to be interesting is to see if the EU follows us on this (…). I know that a few of the NGOs will be submitting disability stuff, not very innovative… will [the EU] go for something more classical? It will be interesting to see how we're perceived. (INGO national representative)

---

[63] Registration to the EU PROSPECT portal, for instance, is mandatory, and organisations are required to be enrolled, vetted, have audit reports available, and a large amount of governance policies in place – sometimes spanning years prior to the application. This is also the case with a number of development funders, such as DFID who request the *Supply Partner Code of Conduct* to be complied with for most of their funding. This document outlines the necessary terms to which development organisations have to comply with in order to be deemed suitable partners.

[64] Uma Mishra-Newberry spoke at the "Women In Dev Presents: Donors and Movements" session on 24/07/2019. All of her following quotes are taken from this session. The footage of this session can be found online here.

[65] In this quote, Uma Mishra-Newberry refers to grassroot movements and organisations as Southern local organisations that work with local communities. Thereby, she aims to reinstate a notion of embeddedness within local issues and groups, and seeks to differentiate these from international or non-national organisations which do not have access to privileged understandings of local issues. In explaining this usage of grassroot movements and organisations, I do not aspire to essentialise her statement or imply that all local organisations intrinsically understand the needs of communities.

This INGO decided not to include PN (their only partner in Nepal) in their application. Instead, the INGO intended to use this funding to expand its partnership arena by developing relations with other national NGOs, so as to ensure its sustainability in Nepal. In recent decades, development priorities have followed the trends instigated by international guidelines and frameworks, which in turn has favoured some target groups or topics above others, irrespective of the impact on populations and settings:

> When the Bill [and Melinda] Gates Foundation started, there was suddenly all of this language around innovation because the people that were controlling the money for development were entrepreneurs, so they wanted it to look like an entrepreneurial model, which is absurd! (…) That was where all the money was. Suddenly all the language… and then all the development partners, all they were doing, they were trying to do their projects that they wanted to do anyway, to fit it into this language which is currently the most fashionable! (Laura, development stakeholder)

This example highlights how 'structural power operates even when there are no instances of A acting to exercise control over B' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 53); instead, competition between international and national development stakeholders is effectively organised and structured by funding agencies and shapes the interests of competing organisations. Development organisations with incomparable advantages and resources embrace aggressive strategies to ensure financial sustainability against the partners that they are involved with in DPs; thus, structural power reinforces social positions of domination and superiority, as well as asymmetrical privileges. On the one hand, the European Commission implied through this funding scheme that it was equally accessible to all development stakeholders whilst on the other, not enforcing the conditions for equality; the funding can therefore be considered a token of structural power that 'work[s] to constrain some actors from recognizing their own domination' (p. 53). When we consider that DPs are expected to share values such as mutuality, reciprocity, trust, empathy within their microcosm, the macrocosm that the organisations find themselves in and have to navigate to survive is not taken into account.

Competition is tied up with a number of other problematic development trends. Projectification ensues from financial dependency and pushes development organisations

to constantly design and implement 'innovative' interventions, shaping the desires, aspirations and interests of the organisations. As explained:

> The lack of core funding, only funding projects or short-term 6-month grants reify not only the harmful process of inequity, but they reify harmful working structures. (Uma Mishra-Newberry, Women's March Global)

This was clearly seen with GlobeHealing and Meryl, who were dependent on PN to elaborate innovative projects to continue their activity in Nepal; and with Poverty & Development who exploited PN's dependency on the funding to shape the project to fit their own agenda. The onus on 'innovative' means that activities are rapidly untrendy, becoming obsolete and unattractive to donors.

Structural power shapes not only the capacities and resources of development protagonists, it also curtails the quality of DPs and the opportunities for Southern CSOs to access sustainable funding which would free them from unequal power relations.

In this section, I decided to draw on multiple forms of power to analyse DPs power asymmetries because 'different forms of power have different domains of application to the extent that they illuminate different ways in which social relations affect and effect the ability of actors to control their fates' (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p. 68). Examining the ways in which Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power applies to power asymmetries in DPs – namely through their association of key power dimensions discussed in Chapter 3 – reveals the multiple levels, forms and instances where power is produced dynamically as part of development relations and practices.

6.2.2   Postcolonial theories to analyse DP power issues

In this section, postcolonial theories reveal the entrenched production of power asymmetries within the development sector. Postcolonialism allows one 'to better reveal the tactics and representational practices of the dominant' (Kapoor, 2008, p. xiv); I focus here on five key issues.

During the fieldwork, assumptions around corruption, management failings, lack of transparency and organisational capacity were articulated by international development stakeholders during interviews and were mobilised on a regular basis by donors to justify unequal relations with their local partners. Stereotypical, prejudiced and intolerant remarks were made about PN, the leadership style, the organisational culture, the assumed reasons for which PN existed and survived in the development sector, PN's motivations for engaging in partnerships, the benefits reaped by PN, etc. (see Baaz, 2005 for similar findings). Whilst interviewing one of PN's donors, a number of these assumptions arose repeatedly:

> The day there is no more money, no problem, you say goodbye… and that is clearly a way of functioning specific to Nepali NGOs. I am not sure to what extent PN is contaminated by this, but they are clearly service providers: 'There's money, off we go, there's no money, we don't care, we reduce staff, and it's ok, we wait for the next opportunity'. There is no… no continuity. (Donor interview)

Here, the motivations for the partnership are portrayed as being solely of a pecuniary nature – this reasoning was repeated across donor interviews. Development stakeholders argued that the organisational culture across Nepali CSOs was inherently focused on the financial benefits of DPs who moved from one opportunity to the next. This quote also highlights a number of other problematic assumptions: operating as 'service providers' should be judged negatively; that reducing staff to cater to sectoral constraints is a common and unemotional practice (as I show in Chapter 7, PN permanently have to juggle with projects and funding to ensure staff retention); and that Nepali CSOs 'don't care' about the outcome of DPs or the development endeavour at large. The inference of a national 'contamination' of this organisational culture shows the extent to which development stakeholders mobilise pejorative (parasitic) beliefs around the partners they engage with in Nepal. I found this negative approach to infuse all dimensions of DP relations. The following quote deals with a PN-donor meeting:

> I brought up a number of difficulties with [two PN staff], and they both surprised me, I wondered if they were taking the piss. I said that there was a number of things that weren't working well, and they replied: 'It's your job, tell us, continue what you're doing, manage PN's team, that works well for us. You can continue criticising, you can continue redefining, you can continue putting us back onto the track, you're doing your job'. You see, that was completely surprising as a conversation, when six months before that, they were holding an opposite view. Maybe they have other strategies that I don't control. (Andrew, development stakeholder)

In this quote, Andrew considers PN's willingness to ease previously tense relations with their donor as suspicious, presuming PN's staff were not taking the meeting seriously and were 'taking the piss'. This statement suggests that Andrew cannot envisage PN's evolving interactions in any other way than underlined with malice or hostility. In mentioning 'strategies that [he] doesn't control', Andrew infers that he usually holds the control over the relationship with PN, hinting at asymmetrical partnership relations. There are a number of problematic underlying assumptions revealed in this quote: PN do not engage in the DP seriously ('taking the piss'); PN has developed hidden agendas ('they have other strategies'); PN are being unruly from the expected DP relations controlled by GlobeHealing ('they both surprised me', 'six months before that, they were holding an opposite view').

Issues of rigid and ascribed identity are central to this quote, with PN's identity externally formed by the donor. The formation of identities of the 'inferior Third World other' (Fanon, 1961) clearly permeate this quote, and reveals how identities are instrumentalised in DPs to assert and consolidate domination (Baaz, 2005). 'Fixity' in the formation of colonial identity and otherness, a concept developed by Bhabha in his acclaimed essay *The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism* (1994), relies on rigidity and repetition to entrench domination and subjectification. Here, the concept of fixity in the formation of the Other highlights how identities are perceived as rigid and unchanging – exposing the discomfort and concern shown by Andrew when PN display behaviours that do not follow the stereotypical image conveyed by the colonial discourse[66].

---

[66] According to Bhabha (1994), the colonial discourse stands for the 'form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization' (p. 67). He considers the colonial power to be 'an apparatus of power' (p. 70) which

The politics of representation and identity formation have to be examined within a broader analysis of the colonial discourse that prevails in the development sector, and which contributes to homogenising the sector, as well as practices as constitutive of a Nepali development identity. Donor interviews showed the extent to which PN was constantly amalgamated with other organisations or other development practices:

> There is such an administrative burden, and it is such a chaos, it's insufferable. (…) It's so complicated working in this country, as in some other countries. It's part of these countries where we have this real administrative burden and these rules that are being imposed to call upon external providers the whole time, national providers. It's complicated for us, because we're not an NGO that comes in just to set up activities, we're an NGO which has other values and other projects. (…) They won't let us do anything, (…) so it's complicated in Nepal. (Development stakeholder interview)

In this quote, the development stakeholder establishes linkages between a number of complex (yet common) beliefs. They connect national development policies enforcing collaborations between local partners and INGOs for in-country development interventions (see section 2.4); lack of freedom for INGOs to do business as usual; the difficulties in working with government officials; the donor/partner spectrum; and a complex history of 'soft' domination through protectorate. In her postcolonial study of identity in the Tanzanian development aid sector, Baaz (2005) reveals 'the vacillation between, and strong concurrent presence of, insecurity and security' (p. 17) in donor narratives, including 'strong feelings of lack of control and failure, but also equally strong security, control and confidence' (p. 17). This development stakeholder's quote aligns with this analysis, with assertive beliefs on the development sector and practices in Nepal shaping their opinion on how work is rendered complicated because of the 'administrative burden', 'the rules that are being imposed', and not being allowed 'to do anything'.

The dynamic connections established between stereotyping and a feeling of insecurity shine light on the functions and effects of stereotyping as a means to exert and rigidify power

enforces knowledges and truths on the colonised and the coloniser, asserting domination and control of the latter on the former.

asymmetries. Baaz (2005) draws on Bhabha's (1994) notions of vacillation and ambivalence to expose the extent to which the identity of otherness is 'founded more on anxiety than arrogance, and colonial power [has] a conflictual structure—hence, colonial stereotyping of subject peoples [is] complex, ambivalent, and contradictory as a form of representation, as anxious as it [is] assertive' (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p. 212). Stereotypes, as seen throughout the previous quotes, become 'an articulation of difference contained in the fantasy of origin and identity' (Bhabha, p. 67) and draw on fixity to reinforce the production of knowledge and power. For Baaz (2005), stereotypes are resorted to as a ''momentary coping mechanism' triggered by situations of stress and insecurities' (p. 19), an instrument of the colonial discourse which hints at the contradictions experienced by Northern development stakeholders working in Southern settings.

As seen throughout the quotes included in this section, practices and relations of power are based on assumptions of ascribed and rigid identities, founded around the contrast, competition and complementarity of international and national development actors. Development partner identities rely on contradictory images and beliefs involving the 'superior, active and reliable Self [donor] in contrast to an inferior, passive, unreliable partner' (Baaz, 2005, p. 9). These identities were discussed in Chapter 5 with the imaginaries of symbiosis, and here they are mobilised with Meryl, GlobeHealing, Poverty & Development and PUK, but also in many other encounters with development stakeholders.

This means that PN are exposed to competing identities attributed externally, that are either othering (when conflated with the communities, seen as beneficiaries or 'supplicants') (Baaz, 2005; Kenny, 2008) or absorbing (when conflated with the donors via 'our team'). Development partner identities are not only the workings of development organisations, they are part of the development discourse, and permeate also discourses on poverty, corruption, health and economic growth (see Chapter 2) (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 2005; Sachs, 2010).

6.2.2.2   Essentialising development cultures[67] and relations

Throughout their interview, one development stakeholder proceeded with sharing their thoughts on how the relations with the Nepali government were reminiscent of previous development missions experienced in other settings throughout their career:

> [About the donor/partner spectrum] That's a special feature of Asian countries [being called a donor], and more specifically of Nepal, and some other Asian countries that are as annoying and strict. I've worked in Mongolia and China, and you don't get that there at all… I've worked in Korea, and they were super annoying too. I have worked in Africa, but in South America, we were programme actors with civil society agents. But here in Nepal, it's a burden; and the Nepali authorities are very strict. Nepalis are very proud, it's a part of their history; even though they have had a century of English protectorate, they have still had centuries and centuries of independence before then, and they hold onto that. (Andrew, development stakeholder)

Andrew draws connections between his development experiences of expatriation across multiple contexts in an effort to overcome the feelings of 'insecurity, and experiences of unpredictability, of a lack of control' brought around by relocation (Baaz, 2005, p. 18). Artificially establishing linkages between contexts, behaviours and identities, and constituting identities on the basis of a Eurocentric reading of colonial history, reveals 'the effort to fix the Other' (p. 18).

In trying to find common features with other DPs that he has been involved in, Andrew implies that development cultures are homogenous across settings, contexts and time, and that there exists a 'cultural essence' (Baaz, 2005, p. 49). Said's (1979) critical concept of Orientalism (see Chapter 2) describes the tendency towards 'disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region' and displaying cultures as 'fixed in time and place' (p. 108). The sentence 'The West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior' (p. 109) is particularly relevant

---

[67] For a broader discussion on culture, cultural difference and cultural supremacy, see Fanon (1961) and Bhabha (1994, pp. 34–35).

throughout Andrew's interview. The reference to the particular history of Nepal (see section 2.4) as an explanation for Nepalis' 'pride' and 'independence' was mentioned during several interviews with Northern development stakeholders, always negatively and as an explanation for complex relations – deducing it was easier to work with partners from previously colonised countries. The DPs relations that Andrew engages in *now* can thus only be conceptualised in light of an abstract (and uncomfortable) history that is simplified so as to make sense of identities that were formed by the Western coloniser. Drawing on the history of Nepal as a means to essentialise and compare development practices and stakeholders contributes to rendering invisible the ongoing issues of systemic power.

Andrew's historical insights into contemporary DP dynamics shape the ways that he engages with other development stakeholders, as highlighted in this quote:

> We're really in a British territory: you can really feel it. British have the power, DFID is super strong here, British NGOs too. It's a closed world, they're occupying the space. It's difficult for us, it's not simple for [European] NGOs in a British world. For other European aid, GIZ [Germany's Technical Cooperation Agency] is really present. I have more ease with GIZ. (…) I've gone around to meet everyone, they listen politely, answer 'how interesting', but there is no funding, it's no one's priority. The big donors, Japanese, Korean, DFID, the Americans etc. they sign big contracts with the Nepali government. (Andrew, development stakeholder)

Essentialisation consists of simultaneously attributing historical and a-historical characteristics to individuals or countries (in this case, organisations), 'transfix[ing] the being, "the object" of study, within its inalienable and non-evolutive specificity, instead of defining it as all other beings, states, nations, peoples, and culture' (Said, 1979, p. 97). Andrew has conceptualised the difficulties he experiences in his role as intrinsically connected to PN's staff behaviour, the specificities of working in some countries rather than others, the government's rules and regulations, or the history of British domination over Nepal. Each of these justifications essentialises development stakeholders' identities and practices and constitute the 'discourses of otherness – the need to fix the colonised in a perpetual otherness – on the one hand and the civilizing mission on the other' (Baaz, 2005, p. 45). Interestingly, the discourses of otherness mobilised by Andrew reveal the ongoing

competition that exists between development stakeholders in the 'colonising mission', and the politics of co-optation and association intrinsic to DPs.

These discourses of otherness are co-constructed around broader discourses that circulate across the development sector in Nepal in general, and Nepali organisations in particular. I retrieved the following quotes from interviews with donors to illustrate the multifaceted assumptions mobilised by Northern development stakeholders:

> You have, you know, actually, quite a bizarre, at scale, you have a very serious remote management issue, and you have 60 years of really bad development practice to learn from but also break from, so there are lots of HR problems. (Colin, development stakeholder)

> Nepal is one of these extreme cases of what has gone wrong in development in a way. There are just so many organisations here, so many NGOs. It has become such a business, and a thriving business! There is a very unique way of working for NGOs. I am sure there are good ones as well. (…) It's become a whole industry in a way. (…) After 70 years of development assistance in this country, the same people are poor, the others become richer and richer, or at least, are manageably poor or well-off, depending on what you call it. And we haven't changed anything about this. (Susan, development stakeholder)

> There are so many NGOs in Nepal with no donors, and that don't do anything, and that are desperate to get some money and do something, and are happy to be just told what to do. (Laura, development stakeholder)

These three quotes highlight the beliefs circulating within the development sector: despite long-term intervention, no changes have been made (by Northern development stakeholders: 'we haven't changed anything'), Nepali people remain in need and suffer from poverty, and stemming here from bad practices that have been established ('remote management issue', 'lots of HR problems'). All of these features have enabled the organisational boom and the rise of a 'striving business', albeit of NGOs 'that don't do anything'. I found these assumptions mobilised in every interaction with Northern stakeholders, but also in some empirical literature which did not endorse a critical approach

(see Adhikari, 2008; Karkee and Comfort, 2016). Essentialising the Nepali development culture, practices and actors through these beliefs allowed these actors to justify ongoing development and Northern intervention in Nepal, with the Other requiring to be saved from itself (Spivak, 1983) by the capable Westerner.

These features of the colonial discourse are constructed around notions of evolutionary development that shape the arguments mobilised by Northern development stakeholders to explain development failures (Baaz, 2005). 'Backwardness as an explanation for development failures' (Baaz, 2005, p. 40) is attributed to three key beliefs that circulate among development stakeholders: firstly, development is evolutionary and should be enacted through successive stages (if development is carried out too rapidly, problems will emerge). Secondly, the conditions for successful development require national and individual 'readiness' (failure is often attributed to 'the people' or the country 'not yet at that stage' (p. 41)). Poverty is also put forward as a limiting factor for development, with the Other being irresponsible, cupid or incapable of dealing with the financial influx expected through development intervention.

Following these evolutionary development prerogatives, failure cannot be associated with erroneous development designs, or DP relations fraught with power imbalances, or any other development issues highlighted by critical studies. Rather, 'expectations have been too high and not adjusted to the backward position when the struggle for development began' (p. 42). Drawing on such evolutionary development claims allows proponents to forego the need for a critical analysis of the power asymmetries within development relations and practices.

Essentialisation was also a common feature of the SDP partnership expansion narrative. The idea(l) of partnership replicability across settings and contexts appeared as one of the main drivers and motivations to the expansion project, with the opinion that 'if it worked in Nepal, then it can work elsewhere'. Interviews with some PUK participants brought to light the causal and essentialising arguments that found the expansion project, such as illustrated below:

> Let's choose a country, let's choose... Syria, for example. Some part of Syria, which is really, really struggling right now... not that I know much about that country, but let's just say that... hum... and it doesn't have to be in the mountains or anything like that, it has to be in some sort of community whereby there is no primary health, there is no..., the education system has fallen down, people are without work, and what have you... and... you know... women will be marginalised, in that society, there will be... class systems going on, not necessarily as overt as the cast system that we experience in Nepal, but nonetheless, I am sure there will be all that going on. And somebody like, some of our colleagues in Nepal, who will be at the sharp end of trying to address these issues, could be advocates and role models for work in Syria, for example. Or in some of the areas on the Thai border with Myanmar (...) You know, there's a lot of work to be done there, for example. And you know, it's very close geographically... so there could be huge work done there. (...) I just mentioned 3 places which I know... well I don't know. (Philip, PUK)

The colonial discourse, infused with concomitant and generalised assumptions and stereotypes around poverty, need, class, portrays Nepal's neighbouring countries as territories that require intervention. PN's staff, who have already undergone such intervention, are deemed by PUK to be relevant facilitators of development activities in new territories. This quote reflects an underlying belief that circulates throughout PUK – and more largely throughout the development sector: the 'Other' Nepali, in benefitting from PUK's ongoing support, has become a little less of an Other, and can be considered an instrument of change for 'new' Others. Dislocating otherness across assumed similar contexts and settings was a central theme for all the supporters of the partnership expansion.

6.2.2.3 Representations of the Southern partner and retaliative actions

More surreptitious statements (such as described in the vignettes with Poverty & Development's and GlobeHealing's representatives) made clear the underlying assumptions that permeate DP relations. I heard for instance that 'our contact person [in PN] is not very

skilled, (…) they are doing without understanding what we want' (donor interview). These statements shaped the ways in which DPs relations were formed and evolved: this was seen notably through the assumption that PN staff required micro-management (seen with GlobeHealing), that PN staff do not have specialised skillsets required for development interventions (discussed with Meryl), or that PN staff cannot understand the complexities of technical forms such as logframes (described in Poverty & Development). I observed a meeting between PN and a donor which was infused with tension and issues of control and domination, which was subsequently explained to me by the donor as follows:

> You saw during the meeting to what extent I had to take the lead and micro-manage… (…) My role is to smoothen this mess. Our role is for us to achieve our operational aims. (…) There's pressure on me: I have to prove that our approach is relevant, I have to show results, so clearly, I have a considerable amount of pressure… and our partner is always late… and above that, our relations are complicated because they're always tense. (Development stakeholder interview)

Here, the donor justifies 'tak[ing] the lead and micro-manag[ing]' as a necessary means to deal with a dissatisfactory partnership. In an attempt to explain their behaviour throughout the meeting, they use two key pretexts: on the one hand, they mention the institutional pressures and the responsibilities that fall on them as a reason to dominate the meeting (and the DP); and on the other hand, the partner's [PN's] lateness and tenseness which cause the relations to be 'complicated'. There are two vital juxtaposed power analyses that emerge from this quote. Firstly, Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) two-dimensional power operating through detraction, institutional conflict and punishment (see section 3.1.2); and secondly, a postcolonial reading of PN's (assumed) behaviour as an excuse to enforce punishment.

According to Amanda, the identities that are mobilised in the formation of these beliefs are the following:

> [The] perception is so engrained, that people don't even notice it, that someone from a Western background is inherently more… reliable and safer and… understands the ethics better… and… is less likely to abuse authority and less likely to be corrupt. (Amanda, PUK)

215

As explained by Said (1979), 'the Orient and Orientals (…) as 'object of study' (…) will be, as is customary, passive, non-participating, endowed with a "historical" subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself' (p. 97). What the donor implies in this quote is that *because* PN are always late and tense, they are required to take appropriate measures, and therefore have to resort to leading and micro-managing the meeting, and more broadly, controlling the actions of PN and the DP as a whole. The alignment between the donor's quote and the colonial discourse hint at the level of culturalism that permeates the development discourse. Culturalism stands for the argument that a culture difference exists which can explain local behaviours and identities, with 'difference located in culture' (rather than in race), and the 'attribution of (intellectual) inferiority to the Other' (Baaz, 2005, p. 47). When applied in this scenario, culturalism contributes to the representation of the Southern partner, and justifies the enactment of specific retaliative actions by the Northern development partner in order to 'smoothen this mess'.

These comments and behaviours, 'repeated and reconfirmed' by PN's development partners (Kapoor, 2008, p. 7) perpetuate colonial and imperialist representations of Southern partners as inferior, incapable, ignorant, dependent and passive (Said, 1979; Kapoor, 2002; Baaz, 2005; Kenny, 2008). Processes of misrepresentation, othering and devoicing involve systematically controlling the narratives that are produced in development relations, shaping the development policies that detrimentally affect and subjugate Southern partners, and removing the main protagonists from mobilising knowledges that differ from Western theories (Said, 1979; Spivak, 1983; Kapoor, 2002; Baaz, 2005).

6.2.2.4   The politics of ownership

Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I found that *development ownership* (who takes credit for the impact of development interventions, who is deemed responsible for their failings) was fraught with issues of organisational visibility and impact.

Cultural traits or characteristics are drawn upon by donors to attribute/impede development ownership, such as the one recounted by Chimini:

> Sometimes, the work towards the planned activities changes when working with the communities: the timelines or activities have to be amended. The donors think it's PN's responsibility, they look for the weaknesses with PN rather than understanding that PN is trying to arrange best with the given circumstances. (…) Donors always seek for the weaknesses instead of the strengths. (…) They focus on the mistakes and elaborate on the mistakes, instead of focusing on alternatives, providing suggestions and feedback… (Chimini, PN)

The focus on wrongdoings or faults and the allocation of unilateral responsibility for failure upon PN illustrate the assumptions that only Global North development actors have a sufficiently professional stance to respond to issues of poverty (see Chapter 2) (Kenny, 2008) – and that their national and local counterparts are merely tools to achieve this (Baaz, 2005). In light of these relational expectations, PN senior staff have to 'suck it up' (diary entry 16/05/2019), 'grit [their] teeth and deal with it' (participant expression), and experience friction loss. As expressed by a participant: "In most of the cases, we suffer [laughs]" (Bibek, PN).

The issues around development ownership can be found within other DP relations, and concern visibility and reputation. In section 6.1.2, I discussed GlobeHealing's 'omission' and misrepresentation of the role of PN in a report produced with PN, and how PN had been 'erased' from a project documentary. In another four instances during the fieldwork, PN had to mitigate tensions with INGOs around issues of visibility. In a first instance, an INGO admonished PN staff for appearing with PN logoed t-shirts in the project communities, arguing that they were being 'too visible within the community'. During the PN biannual conference, project staff recounted how a renowned INGO painted their own emblematic colours over the water facility previously installed by PN in a remote community – with images supporting this account. Another INGO took shots of PN's livelihoods project equipment, framing the photograph so that PN's logo was not apparent, and claimed the facilities and the yield as the result of their intervention. And yet another INGO distributed baby goats who turned out to be ill, and later took pictures of the healthy baby goats that had been provided by PN. These are not isolated occurrences, and cause concern for PN staff:

> Some of the staff raised the question: 'we do all the things there, we sow the seeds with the farmers, we build the tunnels, and everything, we build, but other donors came and took the photos. What can we do?'. 'Nothing (…), because we cannot fight with them [the donors]'. (Bibek, PN)

Northern and Southern development stakeholders are tied up in competing stakes to prove the effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions that they design (see Chapter 2), which has led organisations working in development (partnerships) to contend for ownership and impact. As shown in Bibek's quote, PN is disproportionally affected by this tendency, and cannot address omission or misrepresentation frontally with the donors. Issues of organisational visibility absorb crucial management time and capacity, and strongly demotivate field and project staff.

Issues of competition and visibility are symptomatic of the lack of ownership bequeathed to local organisations: organisational appropriation, representation and misrepresentation hint to the power asymmetries that exist between local NGOs and INGOs. In rendering PN's work invisible, in reappropriating it as theirs – when competing for visibility and impact, or when conflating PN's work with theirs – INGOs contribute to the ongoing sectoral imbalances. I have found that these issues are seldom broached in empirical studies. However, in considering the centrality of the issue in most of the DPs that I observed throughout the course of the fieldwork, there is a crucial need to investigate competition as a key relational dynamic in DPs, and analyse issues of organisational visibility and ownership as revealing of power asymmetries in DPs.

6.2.2.5   Sectoral exclusions and silos

Stereotyping, essentialising, and misrepresenting identities constitute different features of the colonial discourse (Said, 1979; Spivak, 1983; Bhabha, 1994; Baaz, 2005; Kenny, 2008) that contribute to entrenching domination of Northern development stakeholders on their Southern partners. These features and their subsequent effects unequally affect local development actors, as they shape the spaces in which Southern partners exist and evolve and the opportunities they can access:

> If a BIPOC[68] manages to get through those gates [engaging with donors], then they face not only establishing trust with whoever is representing those foundations, or the individual fund manager, whoever they encounter, but they also encounter and continue to encounter microaggressions, implicit power structures that further serve to dehumanise BIPOC in the process of advocating for their work, for their cause, for their organisation. (Uma Mishra-Newberry, Women's March Global)

Sectoral and systemic issues of racism and neo-colonial relations pervade all the partnerial experiences of PN, at organisational and individual levels. I spoke with a PN staff member who explained how much Nepali development workers are excluded from development processes: he is not granted meetings with key stakeholders despite multiple requests, and he finds he cannot access spaces where donors gather. The neo-colonial relations entertained in the development sector in Nepal physically and symbolically impede him from partaking in crucial negotiations that impact his organisation and its sustainability:

> This development sector is very, very racial; if you go [Rosie] and talk with someone, they will give you money, but if I go, they will not give. It is not because I will be telling a different story, or you will be telling a different story; but because of the colour, you know? (Sang, PN)

Racism is an organising principle of development (see critical authors cited in Chapter 2), and has come to symbolise the workings of the entire sector. Sang's quote explicitly reveals that cultural racism shapes development identities and constitutes a crucial challenge for Nepali development staff, establishing boundaries that cannot be transgressed nor openly confronted. Sang continued with many more accounts of experienced or witnessed racism, but asked for these to remain OTR – as was the case with a number of other PN participants – hinting at the complexity in condemning and exposing issues of power and discrimination in the development sector.

The role held by individuals working for international development organisations contributes to asymmetrical relations because, beyond the development project (Escobar, 2005), the benefits reaped by expats in their roles (Baaz, 2005; Escobar, 2005; Kenny, 2008)

---

[68] BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, People of Colour.

enforce racist relations. The topic of 'expats' in development came up regularly throughout the conversations with Nepali development workers:

> People from foreign countries who are not doing well, they come here (…) and they become the director of some international NGOs, because they are there, they are… British people, or German people, they are from the West, (…) and they are trusted by the other organisation invested in their country or in other countries, so they are making it big here, being the boss of the organisation (…). You are a white person, you speak English, (…) and you just become the boss! (Sajit, PN)

The standards of living ('if you earn $2,000 in Nepal, you can live a king's life, if you stay in Nepal', Sajit, PN) combined with the advantages of expatriation life (accommodation, services, access to close spaces and networks) provide international development stakeholders with privileges. Such privileges reinforce identities of superiority and domination that strongly affect the relations that are then developed with Southern partners:

> For a person [expat] based in Nepal, and he stays in Nepal all the time, how big his life can be! (…) Sometimes, if you are not making good career in your country, you might come to this country, spend some time here, gain some experience, then you may be, you will definitely be trusted by some international NGOs to be leading their organisations, the Nepal branch. (Sajit, PN)

The prospect of career progression in Southern settings, and the intrinsic benefits of expatriation might thus generate ethical contradictions between development discourses that posit solidarity and equality as central pillars of development interventions and personal and professional stakes (Baaz, 2005). In navigating these internal disputes, it appears that some Northern development stakeholders resort to essentialisation, stereotypes, cultural difference and evolutionary development claims to justify the sectoral and individual processes of exclusion described throughout this chapter.

As shown throughout this section, identities and power are produced on a permanent basis, constitutive of each interaction. In the development sector, relationships and practices are infused with and characterised by social and economic inequalities enacted between donors

and Southern partners; on this basis, 'the privileged power position' in which the donor finds itself means that they are most often the one 'that sets up 'the rules of the game' of development cooperation' (Baaz, 2005, p. 75).

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to addressing RQ2 *How are power asymmetries produced in the development sector, and how do these influence the modalities, relations and practices of DPs?* and dealt with the production of power within the development sector, and the effects of power asymmetries on DPs as a whole, as well as the organisations and the individuals involved in DPs. The vignettes illustrated the extent to which Southern partners are forced into problematic partnerships to ensure project and organisational continuity. I examined issues of competition, visibility and ownership experienced by PN. The friction loss and other dehumanising processes, as well as the stereotyping and essentialising practices, are common occurrences, and an intrinsic part of the relations with donors. However, these occur in multiple shapes and forms, are often insidious or covert, and are difficult to address directly.

Associating Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power and a postcolonial study of power relations in DPs pointed to 'power as pervasive yet fractured' (Kapoor, 2002, p. 656); it also emphasised the entrenchment of unequal relations in the DPs examined throughout this project. If Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy highlighted a variety of forms of power (compulsory, institutional and structural) playing out through different relations and practices, hinting at the *fractured* nature of power in DPs, the postcolonial analysis stressed the *pervasive* and broad nature of power in DPs. That both analyses supported one another is revealing of new areas of power production and their effects on the organisations and individuals working in development.

A postcolonial analysis of partnerships exposes their rootedness in deeper structural manifestations of neo-colonial relations (see Chapters 3 and 5) that posit superiority, authority and control as intrinsic to power asymmetries within DPs (Kenny, 2008). Critically untangling the colonial relations that found development work and shape the

conceptualisations of poverty, need and inequality which still circulate actively within the sector constitutes a means through which DP relations could be improved and become more equal.

CHAPTER 7:   AVENUES TO MITIGATE POWER ASYMMETRIES IN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

The previous two findings chapters focused on the first two research questions and analysed the numerous layers and levels of power production in partnership narratives, relations and practices. This chapter deals with RQ3:

How do development stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?

RQ3 was devised with the participants to reflect critically on DPs in order to tease out practical, operational, methodological or strategic leads for DP improvement. The founding motivation of this specific RQ is echoed in this quote:

> PN has grown significantly because there is something good in PN, it helps PN to grow this big. So we can share that model to other people. On that aspect, also, there is room on how we can share. I am not saying that we know the answer and we want to share, but at least, we all agree that there is something unique within PN that is making PN a success. PUK could help us to explore that: what it is really? What is that thing? (…) So, to explore that, (…) we can work together, and we can see if there is a good thing in this relationship, this partnership, and we can say with other people 'look, this is how it was'. (…) I think that is one area… they can learn… and we can do it together. (PN director) [69]

---

[69] The past two findings chapters have pointed to issues in the relations between PN and PUK which could suggest that the aforementioned 'success' of the partnership is in question. The expectation of the SDP as a 'successful partnership' was largely shared across both organisations; this narrative was based on the longevity of the partnership, the quality of the relations between the individuals working in the organisations, and the value-added of the partnership for each organisation's sustainability. It is part of the unifying narratives, drawing on notions of complementarity.

The participation of communities of practice in the identification of areas for improvement and lessons learned constitutes a critical process towards social change – this is part of the CPAR underpinning the entirety of the research. For this reason, a commitment to empirical embeddedness was deemed essential to support the work of CSOs based in Global South contexts, and the role of Global North organisations towards improving DPs. Therefore, I have included a vast array of participant voices, as well as diary excerpts, data from CPAR reflexive meetings with PUK and PN, and insights from a cross-organisational event organised in June 2019 which brought together PUK, PA and PN representatives[70].

Drawing from reflections and insights developed in Chapters 5 and 6, and from the rich empirical materials produced during the fieldwork, this chapter is organised in two sections: firstly, I display different accounts from participants on the ways they have attempted – and possibly succeeded – in mitigating power asymmetries in the DPs they are involved in. The second part of the chapter is a discussion of the opportunities for a pluralist power analysis of DPs, and reflections on the ways in which we can support a political and critical stance towards equality and sustainability of DPs.

---

[70] This event took place in margin of a PUK BoT meeting and the 2019 PUK annual conference. I was invited to present an update on the research, an outline of preliminary key findings from the fieldwork, as well as an account of my experience in Nepal. Part of the event consisted of a group discussion on topics identified over the course of the fieldwork: participants were invited to organise sub-groups and choose two topics to examine critically before a group feedback session. Groups included members of PUK, PA and PN (all of whom had participated in interviews during the fieldwork) to ensure even representation and entice critical discussions outside of 'habitual' formalised groups such as BoT or working groups. Topics included: (1) The partnership ≠ the organisations: common, specific or complementary identities; (2) The narrative vs the reality: 'family', ToC, vision/mission; (3) Roles for each organisation: how to increase complementarity, cross-organisational development and support; (4) Organisational governance: the role of boards, trustees and representatives in shaping a new development paradigm; (5) Communications, decision-making, transparency: flows, strategies, processes; (6) Organisational and partnership sustainability: funding, visibility, individuals; (7) How is power currently manifesting in the partnership?

7.1 Development stakeholders' actions towards mitigating power asymmetries in DPs

7.1.1 Reshaping DP relations and practices – efforts made by Northern stakeholders

Throughout this section, I focus on participants' views of the ways in which partnerial relations and practices have been improved with donors and within the SDP. I focus on four key ways in which development stakeholders have mitigated power asymmetries, namely: ensuring financial flexibility, predictability and reliability; reflecting on partnership communications; educating Northern development stakeholders; and the role of donors in establishing transparent and trusting relations.

7.1.1.1 Ensuring financial flexibility, predictability and reliability

This section highlights the issue of financial dependency and discusses the ways in which financial reliability can help shift power asymmetries in DPs. Since the beginnings of the SDP, a yearly budget has been devised by PN which PUK aims to match through fundraising and private donations. At the SDP level, PUK offer a variety of forms of support to PN. These range from trainings on accountant software; GP mentorship to health staff in remote health clinics in Nepal; awareness raising through UK based-events; applying for international funding that PN finds itself excluded from; funding the yearly participation of Nepali staff to the annual conference.

> Since [PUK's] establishment, they have been continuous support and funder. They have helped us with money and also training, capacity building, and all that. (…) That is a great asset for us; we are here because of that. We had money on the very first day of establishment of PN. (Kiran, PN)

In this quote, Kiran highlights the distinctiveness of the SDP: PUK are simultaneously 'support and funder'. PUK is also one of few partners that PN counts that offers 'unrestricted

funding', which means that part of the funding provided is not restricted to specific budget lines and can be allocated to costs that are not covered by other partners' funding.

Unrestricted funds have been instrumental for PN as they have been allocated to ensuring staff retention (at the end of a project, awaiting for new project-related funding); funding activities and staff posts that are not covered by donors; organising emergency responses (earthquakes, Covid-19) or catering for unexpected events that require urgent action. Shortly before the fieldwork, a fire occurred in a village where PN have been implementing projects for many years. The incident caused the destruction of many houses, with families not being able to afford reconstruction. PN were aware that organising an emergency response by mobilising their donors would consist in a lengthy process, and grew concerned at the impact the fire would have on the vulnerable communities that had been affected. They decided to allocate unrestricted funding to the purchase of roofing that would allow for the less severally damaged houses to become viable for the families' relocation.

Moreover, unrestricted funding has provided PN with the opportunity to develop new areas such as research, or purchase material and goods that have enhanced the organisation's capacity and programmes, and generally to make up the reserves that PN can draw on in dire times. PN participants referred to unrestricted funding as a 'leverage for the organisation' that acts as 'gap filling' (Ram, PN). Being able to self-fund invisible or non-accounted for charges such as accounting or management (see Chapter 6) has enabled PN to apply for other sources of restricted funding:

> That has a very good asset for us, a very good help for us. Because of that, we can attract [other] funders, otherwise they don't fund management or all, they just have money from the project interventions, and that doesn't stand alone. (Kiran, PN)

In developing such strategies, PN manages to juggle with the funding requirements of different DPs and engage in DPs which offer only restricted funding.

However, in recent years, unrestricted funds are becoming more difficult to secure from development stakeholders – and this is also the case within the SDP. In the first years, PUK managed to exceed the proposed operating budget submitted by PN, which created a precedent and allowed for PN to expand its activities and submit higher yearly budgets.

However, in recent years, PUK realised that it would not be able to match its yearly commitments:

> Now it's obvious that what we did was that we got all of our friends to give to their maximum extent that they are not going to give every year on, and we have no one else that we can draw on. So then the budget went right down, and we missed the fundraising target for Nepal, having set it too high. So then it was fixed at £90,000, up until at least 2015, because we just did this one special year, and then we were scrambling to try and get back there.

According to this quote, donor fatigue led to PUK missing fundraising targets over the course of the following years. Targets were reached again in 2015 with the earthquakes generating increased public attention to the Nepali context, but have since dwindled again. In their last organisational strategy, PUK have reiterated their commitment to 'Continue to provide at least £95,000 of core funding per year to PN with the aim of increasing this by 2021' (PUK 2018-2021 Strategy), despite a general tendency towards the decline in mobilising unrestricted funding[71] which causes PUK to struggle with the yearly commitment[72]. Despite the decline in mobilised unrestricted funding, PUK have seen a rise in restricted funding that is attributed to "the excellent projects and programme management of our partner [PN], and the increased attention on Nepal following the devastating earthquakes in 2015" (PUK 2018-2021 Strategy). For this reason, PUK aim to adjust their support to PN and have arranged with PN to increase restricted funding and decrease the level of unrestricted core funding.

These changes reflect the evolving constraints of fundraising in a saturated sector: fundraising timelines can exceed 12+ months, and external threats heavily impact on the

---

[71] During the 2014-2018 period, PUK raised £1,96million income (which represents an average of £490,000 yearly), of which: '53% of income is from institutional donors, trusts, and foundations. 11% is from earthquake recovery appeal. 10% from personal gifts. 8% from large events. 5% from other. 4% from regular gifts. 4% from supporter events. 3% from Gift Aid. 2% from Global Giving and Virgin Money Giving and 0.6% from Corporates' (PUK 2018-2021 strategy).

[72] In recent months, the decline in unrestricted funding was exacerbated as activities destined to raise funds from the general public have been cancelled due to the pandemic, suggesting that the core funding will not be attained.

availability of funds, donors' priorities, and the timelines for project implementation[73]. Not reaching the targets set out at partnerial level bears different effects for each organisation: for PUK, it reflects poorly on staff performance, questions the existing fundraising strategy, and challenges organisational growth – including the recruitment of staff responsible for raising given funds. For PN, planned activities have to be cancelled or redesigned, there is a considerable impact on staff retention and/or workload (the funds have to come from another source, and staff have to increase their work on fundraising activities), and it negatively affects the organisational capacity for predicting annual outcomes and expanding strategically.

In order to prepare strategic plans, organise staff recruitment and project new activity streams, PN require clarity on available funds. Whilst interviewing PN participants, the recurring issue of financial reliability and organisational sustainability came up time and again. Funding applications and programme funding are based on strong strategy plans with financial projections. On many occasions, the discord between the rhetorics of sustainability and the realities of financial dependency were expressed as strongly curtailing the organisation's capacity to develop realistic strategies:

> Everyone is talking about sustainability, but without money we cannot sustain, that is the reality, and we cannot have results, and without results we cannot sustain. If all the donors decided at once to stop their funding, we have to pack up, probably we cannot continue for 2-3 months, and we will only have this building [central office in Kathmandu]. So we have to have different channels, different options. (Kiran, PN)

This continuous loop involving short-term funding, projectification and restricted funding has rendered the reporting and accountability efforts of PN more arduous. Financial dependency on external development stakeholders hampers projection or sustainability, for the simple reason that without reserves, any change in funding allocation can drastically

---

[73] This was notably seen with the Covid-19 pandemic which modified the entire development landscape over the course of a few weeks, and led donors to halt applications in process, or to redefine entire funding streams. In the case of Nepal, the country moved from development funds to humanitarian funds, and priorities shifted to health provision and services, abandoning activities around education, democratic strengthening or reconstruction.

modify the outcome for the entire organisation. To counter this issue, PN are seeking to strengthen their array of PUK-type donors:

> Let's have maybe two, three or four, (…) donors which are more reliable, and they will continue to support us in the long run. There may be others coming in and going out, they can be just like that. But if we had some, two, three, four donors on which we could rely on, 'ok, these are the donors that will come to us every year with substantial amount of money', then we could always have others coming in… (…) A pool of donors (Ram, PUK)

Funding predictability and reliability counter funding dependency and contribute to strengthening the landscape of local CSOs by providing local organisations with a contingency.

Another opportunity identified by PN in clearer financial planning between the organisations involves the identification of ways in which the partnership can become more of a collaborative experimenting ground:

> In PUK, we have a full-time fundraiser. But, in PN, we had recently decided to have someone in a similar position. In that area, we could still do together, because (…) there are certain opportunities that only PUK can access and some opportunities only PN can access. So, there is (…) more room to work together on [fundraising]. (Sang, PN)

Across the partnership, key roles are duplicated (communications, fundraising, accountancy) which could be mutualised or better linked, which would in turn strengthen the partnership and improve organisational resilience.

Unrestricted funding symbolises freedom, agency, and sustainability of Southern partners. With key funding becoming more project-related, Southern partners become more reliant on predictable and flexible income streams to strive and design realistic and ambitious strategies. The importance of unrestricted funding for PN persists as it allows for organisational growth, development and financial resilience. Unrestricted funding signals that the Southern partner is trusted with development money spending.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the development sector is strongly infused with semantics that shape the ways in which key concepts are conceptualised, and inform the design of DPs and interventions (Rahnema, 1992, 2010; Escobar, 2005; Cornwall and Eade, 2010; Sachs, 2010). This section is dedicated to an examination of partnership relations, notably partnership communications, which include the interlocutors and informal/formal modalities of communications across the partnership, and how these draw from development semantics.

Within the SDP, development semantics have influenced the partnership relations, as became apparent when PUK obtained the DFID funding which modified the relationship between PUK and PN (see Chapter 5).

> The language that DFID use moved us from two partners together to a funder and an implementing partner. And the language, when you read that DFID grant, it's like, 'you must tell your local partner to do this, and tell your local partner…' (…) The language in that, I was shocked in reading it the first time. (…) Even 'implementing partner' is not a great term, you should just stay 'partner', the 'partner organisation' on an equal front. [It implies] 'you're just the implementing partner, you're just doing the work, but we are really the in-control ones'. (Julie, PUK)

Employing terms such as implementing partners or downstream partners is problematic in three different ways: firstly, as a 'colonial language' (Julie, PUK), it reinforces stereotypes implying that partners' roles and statuses are geographically attributed (the Northern partner holding the strategic power and the Southern partner carrying out the operational activities) (see Chapter 6). Instead of portraying the Northern partner as a financial conduit which can access funding more easily, it attributes inherent qualities and assumptions around the competencies and capacities of either partner. Secondly, using these expressions institutionalises unequal roles and statuses that then operate at partnership level. In Chapter 5, I showed how the DFID funding modified the relations between PUK and PN, with increased accountability chains that brought PUK to request a financial audit of PN. Thirdly, these languages are internalised at organisational levels and mobilised across staff and board spaces.

During the fieldwork, I found that these languages have become so predominant that PN participants refer to the work they do as 'implementing' projects and programmes, and PUK and other donors referred to PN as the 'implementing partners', despite being critical of the languages. Through organisational immersion, I came to better understand how the terminologies render invisible crucial activities, strategies and challenges experienced by PN, as they do not show the complex and nuanced landscape the organisation evolves in, neither do they highlight the programmes and strategies that PN develop, such as disaster risk reduction (DRR) and research (see section 7.1.2.2).

Terminologies and semantics also tarnish the ways in which partnership communications are enacted across PUK and PN. A majority of participants described partnership communications as a key element which 'should be worked on', and required attention and effort. During my interview with Linda, I asked how communications had evolved over the course of the partnership:

> There have been ups and downs in the relationship, you know, it hasn't always been easy, and PUK has made some mistakes in terms of how it has communicated with its partner, and also some of the language used. I think it's still a learning process. (…) I think sometimes… the language has been… it could come across as a bit aggressive, or a bit… … I can't think of a better word than 'bossy'… (Linda, PUK)

In this quote, an 'aggressive' and 'bossy' language could also indicate the ways in which PUK interlocutors had previously positioned themselves as a superior member of the partnership (see the postcolonial analysis in Chapter 6). In describing these occurrences as 'mistakes' that are a concomitant part of a 'learning process', Linda infers that 'aggressive' and 'bossy' partnership communications should be seen as teething pains in an otherwise relatively uncomplicated dynamic. However, as seen in the previous chapters, partnerial communications can also be examined as symptomatic of wider power asymmetries that are constitutive of DPs.

At an individual level, another participant expressed how she had realised the importance of self-reflection on how she communicated with PN:

> I know I've myself made mistakes in the way that I confronted people in PN at times, 'cause I can be a bit brusque, and that's not the way to do it. (…) There's a sort of sensitivity that's really necessary and that's much more necessary on this side than on the other side. (…) We'll always have a sort of different [stakes] in the game, because we in the West have the money without which they can't do anything. But, on my part, I am trying to diminish this all as much as possible when communicating to PN. (Helen, PUK)

Over her years working with PN, Helen has spent time contemplating the impact of her communications with PN staff, and realised that her 'brusque' manner was problematic and should be modified. In critically reflecting on her 'confrontations' with PN, she deliberately sought to communicate in a more professional, respectful and culturally-sensitive manner. She also chose to address specific requests relating to reporting, project information, or evidence data, to PN staff who deal with other donor relations – this entailed limiting her communications to specific PN staff who were more accustomed to interacting with Northern partners. In doing so, Helen recognised that partnerial communications are infused with issues of power and privilege, and that limiting these to staff who are trained/used to engaging with Northern development stakeholders would cause less friction loss and the detrimental effects of problematic communications.

Partnership communications have been improved over the past few years, with the design, development and streamlining of documents destined to outline the organisational strategies and policies in relation to the wording and the images used to communicate around development and partnerships (see Chapter 6 on how these efforts still need increasing). Helen notes that these constitute progress from previous organisational practices, but that these principally concern staff and volunteers located in the office, rather than other governing bodies, as 'not all of the board are on board with it, or think about it very much, or know it…' (Helen, PUK).

Progress in partnership communications was most noticeable in recent exchanges between PN and PUK. In 2019, staff members from PN travelled to the UK and joined PUK's yearly annual conference, which offered the opportunity for an in-person conversation around the funding situation between PUK and PN. In-person meetings are a rare occurrence within the partnership; most of the communications between the organisations consist of operational,

programmatic or technical conversations carried out by a few protagonists using virtual and electronic means. Until the Covid-19 pandemic, the aim was to facilitate two yearly in-person meetings organised around the annual conferences of each partner. The in-person meetings provided the opportunity to discuss strategic and financial issues further, as Linda from PUK highlights in the quote below:

> We found it quite difficult this year [2019] to raise all the funds we planned to for PN, and we had a very mature and useful discussion about how we manage that and about how we share the risk… but also the problems for PN if they get that information quite late, you know? And how we avoid that happening. (Linda, PUK)

In this account, Linda refers to the decline in unrestricted funding discussed in the previous section. Although PUK's difficulty in reaching the yearly target had previously been discussed in BoT and staff meetings (and to some extent had been broached upon during partnerial communications), this event allowed for an in-depth discussion that proved beneficial as Linda goes on to say:

> I think… it was really good for us that… PN… was quite understanding of our issues, you know, quite keen to… happy to have the conversation, to talk about ways it could be managed that would have the least impact on them, rather than saying 'This is terrible, you promised this and now we can't have it'. It was a really… it was a really constructive discussion I thought… (Linda, PUK)

The quote also makes explicit the mutual expectations from each organisation towards the other: in Chapters 5 and 6, I discussed how failings in accountability from PN towards PUK in the earthquakes' aftermath brought PUK to doubt the partnership, leading to the breakdown in trust/solidarity and the formalisation of the partnership expansion agenda. In 2019, however, PUK missing the yearly target was met with understanding and pragmatism on behalf of PN. According to participants, ways of understanding the missed target were in part due to improved partnerial communications; the involvement of new individuals (change in PUK director, new trustees recruited for PUK, other PN staff) in strategic conversations on the partnership future; and more attention given to the ways in which the partnership benefits each organisation:

> … … I think it is important that… … we continue to build and maintain good relationships… with Nepal. I think when the partnership has felt a bit fractious at times it's because we haven't been able to… or haven't given enough attention to maintaining those relationships. And at the moment a lot of it is around [two key representatives], but we also have to be… mindful of… people move on or may want to do other things with their lives, may be out of circulation for a while… making sure we have strong relationships with other parts of PN. That is underpinned by a clear understanding of what… novelty partners want from the partnership and, you know… fairly regularly, reviewing that to make sure it works for both partners. (Linda, PUK)

In this quote, Linda points to two elements that she considers essential in sustainable partnership relations: communications that should not be limited to only a few key individuals, and formalised agreements around the terms of the partnership. These two elements were picked up by a large number of participants during interviews and informal conversations when questioned on the ways in which the partnership could be improved or become more equitable. For both elements, participants tended to consider that inter-organisational relations and practices are crucial for the partnership's longevity and quality, and that communicational failings were in part responsible for the breakdown of trust/solidarity which had in turn tarnished and eroded trust, respect and honesty in inter-individual relations.

Partnerial communications also include the narratives that are being circulated on the SDP. Within the SDP, if most participants conceptualised the relations between PUK and PN as a unique partnership, external communications produced by PUK still portray PUK as the lead on project design and implementation, and minimise or silences the role of PN. This was denounced by some participants who pointed out a 'missed opportunity' for the circulation of a new narrative:

> I really think that we have a great narrative about partnership... (...) PUK could shout from the rooftops that in development partnerships the low-income country partner should be the lead and... and the high-income country partner should be the resource mobiliser... and... and that would make such a good narrative and that's what I'd like to present to the world! But unfortunately, we can't, because the board doesn't buy into that. (Amanda, PUK)

Amanda reflects here on how the board's division has influenced the ways in which the partnership and the organisational relations are conceptualised and featured within and outside PUK (see Chapter 5). She believes that only through a buy-in from the entire organisation will the narrative change, resulting in improved communications.

This has been achieved in PA who actively communicate on their role as fundraisers for PN's work. Their communications and bid writing specify the competencies of each organisation, and highlight the complementarity of the organisations within the partnership. In doing so, PA have positioned themselves as a financial conduit of governmental funding which would otherwise not be accessible to PN. PA have also cautiously devised communication to avoid misrepresentation or appropriation. In doing so, PA position themselves as an advocate for different partnerial relations:

> I do think that partnerships between high-income and low-income level countries could actually start breaking up these long-standing attitudes (...): starting to celebrate the expertise and the capabilities of organisations in low-income countries. And also, just give actual practical support to the leadership of those organisations, and you know, to actually empower capable individuals to do something to improve things in their own country, with the resources. (Amanda, PUK)

Challenging and shifting engrained narratives constitute a first step towards dismantling traditional roles and relations within DPs. In the views of some participants, PUK 'celebrating' PN's achievements and expertise in its communications would enable a critical exploration in new ways to provide support and market the SDP. This would include disclosing and informing on the invisible realities in which PN staff carry out their projects in remote settings; advocating for better representation of the work realised by PN; exposing the problematic relations PN engages in with other donors (as discussed in Chapter 6); taking

a political stance *across* the organisation on the wording used; and rectifying misleading communications.

In this section, I discussed the scope for partnership communications to play a critical role in partnership relations between PUK and PN. I examined the ways in which individuals and organisations play a crucial role in enabling respectful relations at organisational and partnerial levels. In the next section, I examine the necessity to educate Northern development stakeholders, including BoT members, donors, policy makers, on development issues.

7.1.1.3 Educating Northern development stakeholders on development issues

During the fieldwork, I was authorised to observe PUK BoT physical and/or virtual meetings[74] during which I witnessed inappropriate comments which could be perceived as denoting racist, Eurocentric, neo-colonial and/or misogynistic assumptions about the behaviours, capacities or views of individuals, staff or PN as an organisation.

Following discussions with participants[75], I came to understand that these were not isolated incidents, nor were they systematically challenged by other trustee members. I brought these observations to interviews as a point of discussion on power production within DP: participants inferred that these individuals 'mean well', that 'there is a problem but nothing which can be done', or 'we don't have a choice'. This was in part attributed to:

---

[74] I was invited to these meetings as an 'observer', and whilst I was allowed to record the interactions for further analysis, I was asked not to use the materials for the thesis, as the discussions were of a confidential nature. During the events and meetings, I attended, several BoT members were vehiculating problematic perspectives on power, privilege and the partnership, homogenising narratives about PN and other Southern development organisations, and assumptions about organisational culture and expectations.

[75] I mentioned these observations to a minority of participants with whom I felt this would enable a critical discussion on power rather than a defensiveness or minimisation of the events. I did not intentionally ostracise the commentators who had made the remarks, but aimed to use these incidences as openings to reflect on trustee roles, Northern privilege, and engrained colonial narratives in development.

[The trustees] used to be people who would be like 'hey everyone, I want to help out', or 'I went to Nepal on a trip, and it was nice, and I have got some time now I am retired'. It was like that. (…) We did have people who had some background, (…) there were people with skills who had things to offer, who were very clever and had good perspectives… but in terms of development…

Trustees' experiences in the development sector and exposure to development debates prior to their arrival in their roles[76] was noted by multiple participants as a key reason for the circulation of these problematic assumptions. In the first years of PUK, trustees were mostly from the private sector or the health sector, and their involvement in the charity was based on a personal interest in Nepal, which had sparked an emotional reaction to issues of poverty. Recruiting new members was mostly carried out through word of mouth and new recruits were invited by existing trustees, which led to a relative lack of diversity in the trustee profiles. Moreover, the board division that has emerged over the past years (see Chapter 5) has rendered the recruitment of new members more complex and appears to have slowed board renewal. With a limited influx of new board members acquainted with development issues, trustee awareness of current sectoral debates has remained a personal enterprise, which was apparent throughout the fieldwork.

Mentions that 'things would be different if we didn't have a divided board' were made during informal discussions and interviews, implying that the relations between PUK and PN would possibly be of a different nature. Intra-board tensions, as well as the breakdown of trust/solidarity (see Chapter 5) have crystallised and reinforced the positions of some individuals from PUK BoT, impacting inter-individual communications across the partnership, and within PUK's board. The necessity for critical and reflexive debates within PUK's BoT could allow to problematise the narratives and beliefs of the trustees. However, equipping board members with development-related skills and knowledges, the BoT comprehends challenges of its own:

---

[76] At the time of the fieldwork, only two trustees (had) worked in the development sector. The others had come from the private sector, were entrepreneurs or had come from the health or education sectors. Since the end of the fieldwork, one member integrated the board, and another one integrated a working group; both of these have experience in development, and have supported the director and the BoT throughout the pandemic with sectoral insights and advice on how best to deal with the uncertainties relating to funding, communication and fundraising.

Educating people on both sides, and especially on the Western side, (…) is a very tough job, I would venture to say. Because, especially people who are involved in development or fundraising, or whatever, they don't want to hear that they might be a, or the, problem, but they want to have gratitude and admiration. So, I mean, I do think that one of the tasks of [P in the North] is also to do everything possible to present an image of partner organisation and beneficiaries of PN projects that empowers and doesn't… at least, makes it harder to look at them as passive recipients. So, education is actually one of the things that I think is the task of our organisations over here. (Helen, PUK)

The expectation of 'gratitude' and 'admiration' for the involvement of Northern development workers (and in this case, Northern trustees) constitutes in part the 'white saviour complex'. This complex refers to the belief that White people are well- or better-positioned to help people experiencing poverty in developing settings, and that they have inherent skills to tackle systemic injustices and inequalities (Baaz, 2005).

Recent efforts have been made by PUK's director who is involved in rethinking the ways in which the sector could be less prejudiced. They have decided to organise awareness-raising activities at board level, notably on themes such as racism, power and privilege, and communication. However, the motives for these activities have not been set out openly – these were presented to the trustees as refreshers, or were advertised as in line with sectoral trends and current debates occurring within other organisations.

Beyond the BoT, other levels and spaces play fundamental roles in the ways prejudiced assumptions are perpetuated. For instance:

I do think that people [working in INGOs] should have training [on the inherent assumptions that they are superior]. (…) And it needs to be acknowledged, it needs to be thought about, it needs to be sensitively explored, that there is a problem here. (…) If [expat representatives of INGO] had actual training in these issues, if [local staff working for INGOs], you know, who are employed by INGOs, were trained to understand that they are facilitators and not… employers! (Amanda, PUK)

Educating staff working for development organisations marks a key step towards raising awareness on the power and privilege perpetrated through the sector. As suggested in this quote, education would enable the challenging of assertions or beliefs of superiority, and modify professional postures towards Southern partners. As I have discussed in previous chapters, these assumptions and beliefs are mobilised by INGO representatives, donor representatives, and BoT members. Thus, educating development stakeholders requires a sector-wide engagement and an organisational commitment towards critical (un)learning and challenging relations and practices which have previously proven lucrative, are considered mainstream, and have enforced privilege.

More generally, education is key to shifting engrained assumptions around topics such as need, poverty, migration etc. In her development work, Laura has seen how education plays a major role in better grasping the interrelations and complexities of global asymmetries, towards fostering a critical society:

> I really believe into getting young people to think through these issues and be critical consumers of information, and to rethink their life and values actually, in response to what they have seen in Nepal. (Laura, development stakeholder)

Educating development stakeholders and the larger public could contribute to erode the visible, hidden and invisible forms of power by deconstructing belief systems based on social, economic, political and cultural assumptions of domination and superiority. It implies inviting new interlocutors and organising events in closed spaces such as the BoT who can work together with development actors to challenge these beliefs. It also involves supporting Southern partners to access spaces from which they are excluded so that they can partake in decision-making processes populated by Northern stakeholders that could influence sector-wide changes. In carrying such education, Southern knowledges and expertise would be acknowledged and integrated in development work.

7.1.1.4   The role of donors in establishing transparent and open relations

I have shown in the previous chapter how relations between PN and their partners and donors are infused with power and friction loss – these relations starkly contrast from the expectations of small organisations working in the development sector:

> The normal, logical role [for donors] to have [with PN]: to be here, to be a liaison person, to help PN to implement the project, to go to the project area, to understand it, to talk directly to the target beneficiaries and the staff, and to support them in getting more money, to spread the message… surely, that should be the role of people like that! (Amanda, PUK)

PN's expectations of donor relations is that their interlocutor should be a supportive protagonist, helping them to navigate the intricacies of the sector. Throughout the fieldwork, I did not witness any partner/donor relations that matched this expectation. However, during an interview with a former PN donor, I heard a very different account from the hierarchical relations, which aligned with Amanda's quote. Here I introduce Colin, a Northern development stakeholder working for an INGO with an office in Nepal. As the country director, he was responsible for overseeing the operational, programmatic and grants development aspects, as well as partnership development and management. Overall, he describes this wide range of tasks as follows:

> I would say it was more like project steering. I wasn't really… I mean, I would be involved in the development of MEL [monitoring, evaluation and learning] tools and making sure that the kind of development of the project was on track in terms of overall objectives. Within that, I was pretty much the lead on donor relations as well. I think a lot of that was also just how to address issues in project delivery with partners. As you know, in Nepal, it's 100% through local partners. (Colin, development stakeholder)

Prior to this appointment, Colin had been working in the development sector in different roles, whilst also researching and reflecting on social activism, the empowerment of grassroot organisations, and 'culture and power and structure' in development work (Colin's

words). This led him to critically explore what was entailed in his position as a donor (although, he mentioned during his interview that 'I never really thought of my role as a donor, and I think that's an interesting discussion in itself') and recognise the political nature of development funding. In conceptualising and recognising his role and the sector as infused with problematic relations and practices, Colin sought to address power asymmetries in the enactment of his role (see Chapter 6):

> At some point, I didn't really care, and I was more than happy to open up the process and try and share as much of the learning I was gaining from being in that room [with other donors] and having the chance to test out things with donors, and share that with PN to their benefit hopefully in the long run. So, you know, showing them budgets, not… not falling into donor and [recipient], hum you know. Even though that maybe is internally sometimes what I was encouraged to do, but as I said, you know, I was blessed with the fact that there weren't other people in the room with PN, it was me in that room with PN. (Colin, development stakeholder)

The quote highlights to what extent donor transparency in funding mechanisms and project design, albeit an institutionalised dynamic, can be challenged at individual level. Whilst Colin had the autonomy and authority to make decisions about how he worked with his national partners – and thereby, what he could share in terms of information – he was institutionally entrusted to be acting in the interest of his own institution, which encouraged him to act as a donor. Despite internal guidelines, Colin personally decided to share with PN budgets and information otherwise considered private. He proceeded as such in part due to his senior position which enabled him to share confidential spaces with PN, something that might not have been possible had he been in a more junior position. His decision to be transparent and open also stemmed from a personal positionality and reflexivity which had been developing over the years prior. In exercising transparency in the relationship with PN, he considered that PN could benefit from the shared information by submitting stronger funding bids and project proposals. He explains how his own approach diverged from that some of his colleagues, and what he felt was the direction of the organisation:

> I had a kind of different approach to how that relationship [INGO and PN] needed to be much more focused on partnership and really respecting the idea that there needs to be mutual interest in it for it to be successful. (Colin, development stakeholder)

In this section, Colin's account exemplifies the individual response to institutionalised power asymmetries. Promoting transparency on funding conditionalities and by leveraging transparent communications, he acted as a supporter of the work done by PN. This non-conventional stance (I did not witness any other form of collaborative relations of the sort during the fieldwork) was born out of an individual commitment to defy hierarchical relations commonly occurring throughout the sector. What struck me throughout his account was the personal and political engagement he felt he ought to bring to his role as a donor, and the fact that he chose not to enforce or reinforce closed and exclusionary spaces.

Throughout this first section, I have laid out the actions taken by Northern development stakeholders to challenge power asymmetries. Some of these actions appear more tentative, hinting at some strategic willingness to address sectoral power issues – such as PUK's director organising awareness-raising events for the BoT without explicitly pointing out his motives. Other efforts demonstrate critical and reflexive attempts to mitigate power asymmetries, at individual level (such as Helen's communicational redirection and efforts; or Colin's institutional defiance). These actions offer some avenues for further reflection on the opportunities and areas where power asymmetries can be tangibly denounced and confronted at an organisational or individual level, which could in turn affect sectoral practices and relations.

7.1.2 Southern organisations' actions and strategies to mitigate power asymmetries

In this section, I lay out the different strategies developed by PN to accommodate the effects and experiences of power asymmetries. I discuss the ranking and weighing of DPs; the development of organisational strategies; the (de)mobilising of expertise; and the exploration of new forms of alliances.

Chapter 6 introduced a number of examples of how partnerial relations between PN and development stakeholders are fraught with power asymmetries. During a discussion with a PN participant on the partner/donor spectrum, and notably, *how do PN deal with complex donor practices and relations*, Sang shared an organisational strategy destined to adjust the staff workload according to the level of complexity and friction loss with donors:

> Every donor… or every funding organisation, can get up to 50 mark (…) the more you get, the better you are! (…) Like: 'difficulty of reporting': you can get up to 10 mark; 'difficulty for funding', 'no accounting': you can get up to 10; and then 'difficulty of communicating': you can get up to 10. So, there are five criteria, and each project, like say, each project manager gets from 100 to 120 credit project. So let's say, if one project manager, if the donor is so difficult in everything, then one project manager can get only two projects, two donors. But some projects get only 20 [marks], let's say they are good… on reporting: 'only once every year, all the templates are there, they just need filling up', 'communication very good, just phoning them or sending them an email, no format nothing'. So some project managers get up to six projects! (Sang, PN)

As explained by Sang, the ranking system was devised to grade donors according to the difficulty in working with them, taking into account programmatic and technical dimensions of project management, such as the reporting and funding; and relational dimensions such as the communication with donors. The lower the mark out of 10, the better the donor features on the ranking system in line with the five criterion elaborated by PN. Project managers within PN get allocated a number of projects/donors according to this ranking system, totalling 100 or 120. This means that some staff can be given up to six projects to manage simultaneously, depending on how 'easy' or 'tough' the grade allocated to the donors through the system. This ranking system recognises the complexity of DPs and the toll these take on the project managers who have to accommodate institutional, organisation and inter-individual demands. The marking also considers the amount of

(invisible) work that staff have to put into relations and accountability practices vs the amount of money that the funding brings in. As demonstrated by Sajit:

> With PN, there are like seven [project] managers, for 32 projects, so everyone is managing more than one project, and every year I am happy that I am getting more challenging projects! It's a kind of training also, cause this year I am looking after a DFID-funded project, and it's lots and lots of reporting standards, which is good for me, because now I can say that I am trained in DFID projects. (Sajit, PN)

In setting this system up, PN have devised a strategy that allows staff to feel like they are being trusted to deal with more complex projects and donors as they progress in their careers. Sajit's excitement at working on more 'challenging projects' is perceived as a reward and a validating feature in response to his experience and good work. PN have learned that partnerships are the result of both inter-subjective and institutional dynamics and staff cannot be expected to perform homogeneously with donors – however, through experience and support, tougher projects and donors can be allocated to staff according to their existing workloads. This strategy enables decoupling from a staff performance-oriented rating: some staff might have fewer projects which generate less income than their colleagues, but this does not reflect their professional skillsets or competencies. The strategy effectively recognises the emotional and psychological impact of hidden and invisible power relations.

In the same way as the marking system described above, PN staff have come to weigh the worth of DPs with donors and INGOs against the benefits incurred by the organisation. This has led staff to strategically approaching challenging or problematic partnerships as 'acceptable' despite the negative experiences or compromises they have to endure.

> When we are doing a [bilateral agency] project, it's kind of… kind of unofficial vetting. It's official vetting of course, but if someone wants to donate to us, become a partner, they will see 'oh, they already are working with [x, y bilateral donors], that means they are good'. So the relationship with big organisations also acts as a… what is… as a pass… or… as a symbolic… goodwill for the new partners to make us partner. It means 'they have to be good, they have to be transparent, otherwise they would not be partners with these organisations'. (Sajit, PN)

As shared by Sajit, partnering with prominent organisations reaps benefits which include: increased organisational visibility, heightened profile and expected reliability within the sector, attractivity to new donors, and symbolic status. Relations and practices are measured against how these contribute to heightening the status of PN in the development sector.

The weighing and ranking of donors occur principally during the management meetings during which staff can share challenges and get support (see Chapter 5). The meetings bring together programme and project managers, accountant staff, logistics and procurement staff, as well as staff involved in fundraising. On a daily basis, participants explain the progress of partnership dynamics and express the burden of sudden donor change of plans or tips on how to deal with challenges as they arise. I have chosen to illustrate the richness of the management meetings with two diary excerpts:

> [Senior staff] reported an unpredictability on behalf of the donor: donor changes their conditions and requirements from one month to the other, and these don't match the initial collaborative agreement. There is also a tendency towards 'work overloading' [where additional project duties have] to fit under the scope of the project (whereas this is not a part of the logframe etc) with no additional financial compensation to account for the extra work. (…) Mention of the 'middle organisation' again, or the 'intermediary' and the miscommunication between the different levels, mostly [bilateral donor] and [Meryl] and how that ripples down onto PN (the smaller organisation) —> with clearer communication, things would be a lot easier. (…) Local governing bodies are trying to skew the recruitment processes and insert their own staff in there (…) Management and staff have to deal with it repeatedly. (Diary entry 10/05/2019)

> [Programme manager] discussing partnership with [INGO]: [INGO] have just asked that payments to community members be changed to monthly basis rather than every couple of weeks, using the excuse that they are worried about [PN] staff time and safety on the roads (accidents), too many back and forth... But the reality [for PN] is that decision was not taken in concertation with PN, that [INGO] have imposed this without consultation, negotiation, discussion, and this is to arrange them – without considering the effects on the beneficiaries, what the risks might be for the communities (larger sums of money being moved, community members not being able to plan ahead thus having to get loans and incurring interest); and possibly the rippling effects of this decision on how PN will be considered by the communities as the enforcer of a decision that could break trust and go against what they stand for on a daily basis... And also the fact that for PN it will take longer, be more complicated, and possibly exclude some beneficiaries who cannot make it on given date. (Diary entry, 15/05/2019)

These meetings have become supportive, educational and cross-learning spaces for managers to share strategies, but also to escalate issues when needed. On multiple occasions, I witnessed these meetings turning into a critical and reflexive space, with leitmotivs such as 'the donor is always right' emerging (see Chapter 6).

7.1.2.2   Development of organisational strategies through new practices and activities

Whilst supporting PN in fundraising for a project located in rural Nepal, the lack of available data meant that the only evidence I could include in the bid was either outdated census numbers which did not concern the region; general data from international reports which did not specifically outline the methods, date or reliability; or information relating to rural settings in India. Lack of relevant and recent data negatively impacts development strategies and interventions, and weakens the fundraising efforts of DPs. It also reinforces stigma and prejudice against groups and issues, and contributes to the circulation of stereotypical practices towards at-risk communities.

One of the barriers which prevent knowledge circulation concerns information and communication technologies for development, in particular, the access, usage, digital literacy and inequality, types of software and devices available and quality and security of storage in both contexts, but also, the types of data available to inform programmatic design. In the context of Nepal, a lack of reliable and updated statistics leads to an underrepresentation of social issues and vulnerable groups (see section 6.1.1 on Meryl), and especially, an omission of regional nuances and challenges between Kathmandu and rural settings (Martin Chautari, 2015, 2016, 2017).

PN's fundraising efforts and partnership development strategies have suffered from the lack of reliable data to showcase the contexts they intervene in and the impact of their activities. This has led PN to set-up a research team. As explained:

> We don't have that hard-core evidence that we need… so, yeah, we have to start from somewhere. (…) we still lack a lot of data. (…) I see the importance of PN going into research, because you know, [we] are working in remote areas where normally people would not go. (Binsa, PN)

PN's research programmes show two strengths: firstly, their office staff are involved in different aspects of fundraising and donor relations. This means that increasing their skills in research will strengthen the ways in which they can convey programmatic, operational or technical issues, and propose areas of change based on tangible evidence. Secondly, PN counts a significant number of staff working in remote settings (circa 100 individuals), which constitutes a pool of potential data collectors who can provide updated, regionally and contextually relevant data, and increase monitoring and evaluation.

> It's a very good opportunity, because just as a researcher, it may not be [possible] to go and stay [in a remote community] for two months. But then you already have a resource that is employed there, so you can use that resource, and then you have people who are involved in that community, who know the community better. So you know, that's a very important resource in terms of how you can utilise them to gather evidence and to gather data. (Binsa, PN)

Relying on local staff who have developed privileged and long-term relations with the communities enables to gather more relevant evidence, and to partake in the set-up of experimental data collection or co-production methods. This was done for instance with a participatory video-making project that PN have carried out in remote settings on the impact of the earthquakes and the national reconstruction programmes.

Exploring new avenues and activities for PN has been possible by means of unrestricted funding provided by PUK and other international development stakeholders. Another key factor is the development of academic networks and relations which have allowed PN to become a privileged interlocutor in Western-based universities concerned with research on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience, and social justice. Opening up the organisation to new activities is a three-part endeavour for PN, as explained in the following quote:

> In our new strategy, we mentioned that, in relation to health, education, livelihoods, PN will be focusing on DRR and research. We want to expand these areas. And now we have a bit of a linkage with [a Western-based university], and we would like to utilise this one as an opportunity, to gain, build up our capacity. If we try [to expand to] new areas, [donors] say 'Where is your experience?'. We cannot compete with others. We will build on these things [DRR and research], and later we can compete with others. So that is our idea, it has been decided in the strategy as well. (…) And the research is partly cross-cutting in P's work. We have collected a huge amount of data sets, but we haven't had the time to analyse them and generate good reports out of that. So part of the interest in having the researchers is that one, and publicise our good work, and share with others. And the other thing, based on these experiences, we would like to build our capacity as a research [centre]. (Kiran, PN)

This strategy devised by PN aims to ensure that the organisation remains both attractive and competitive in the development sector. Partnerships with local research universities and Western-based academic institutions are supporting PN to increase its credibility and legitimacy – however, as seen in the GlobeHealing vignette in Chapter 6, issues of competing visibility and appropriation render some of the work produced by PN less visible, limiting their outreach. Finally, PN have been diligent in gathering project-related data for years, without however, the time or resources to analyse the evidence. One of the priorities

outlined for the research staff is to go through the vast databases and draw lessons and outputs that can benefit the organisation in monitoring, evaluation and fundraising.

On an organisational level, the research focus is representative of a broader and carefully crafted long-term strategy thought to bear significant changes for the future of PN:

> We have three PhDs [members of staff] now. Now, when we apply, our profile will be so strong! (…) Our staff profile, our projects, our number of staff… (…) it's an asset to an organisation to have all this expertise. (…) We are trying to turn PN into a research organisation – not the academic research but the action research. Our main work is to do the project work, to implement the project, but also seeing it from the research point of view makes PN quite unique and strong. (Sajit, PN)

PN consider that through activity diversification, and notably by evolving from a project-oriented NGO to a risk assessment and research institution, they will be able to ensure organisational sustainability and become even more relevant in the national and international development scenes.

The strategy, which informs and shapes the direction of the entire organisation, also holds individual development within its principles. Other activities have been set up within PN that have contributed to increasing the staff's skillsets. In 2016, PN organised a 3-week course on project management that provided staff with different approaches and tools for project management with international donors. Sajit explains how this experience impacted his career:

> I got so many good ideas [from the training], like: how to plan fast, how to make a Gantt chart, how to forecast the risks, all the things. I quickly started using those techniques in my projects, and I could easily manage 11 different projects in one year. That included how to delegate tasks to the staff, not overworking… (Sajit, PN)

Sajit finds that skills relating to logframes, charts and reporting have been instrumental in achieving the tasks involved in managing large projects, and have increased his confidence when interacting with donors. Other trainings, such as the 2019 60-day course on research methods that was held for office staff during the fieldwork, included modules on research concepts, objectives, methods, and qualitative and quantitative analysis software and

approaches, journal reviewing, diary and report writing. The course was also brought to staff working in the communities to train on evidence gathering and processing.

Another facet of individual training emerged throughout the CPAR with PN, with the question of donor relations, and the complexity in dealing with friction loss experienced across the organisation was recurrent (see previous section). This led PN senior staff to contemplate how the organisation can best prepare staff involved in donor relations for the systemic racism that they will undoubtedly experience in meetings. The idea of organising training sessions to prepare staff for these problematic interactions with donors surfaced from my discussions with senior management staff. In providing the opportunity for such trainings to emerge, the organisation is standing behind its staff and recognises that friction loss and structural racism should not be an individual experience.

7.1.2.3   (De)mobilising expertise

In this section, I discuss three specific examples of the ways in which PN have developed means to counter unilateral conditions imposed by development stakeholders, namely: recruitment strategies; methodological expertise; and diplomatic negotiation

When working in remote settings, PN invariably recruit local staff (mobilisers, trainers, data collectors) and include community members in project implementation. In recent years, they have experienced issues with local government agents attempting to influence the recruitment processes by imposing local staff or contracting businesses of their choosing. The intrusions have caused severe hindrance to project implementation and delivery at a local level. They have also detrimentally affected the approval processes of projects at national level, which means that PN experience delays in funding. The organisation has had to resort to a number of strategies to address these intrusions:

> In some of the cases, most of the cases, we have been able to solve [these issues] diplomatically, or by waiting for some time, and let them cool down, and do the things in a transparent way. We have to employ different interventions. (Kiran, PN)

On one recent occasion, PN was approached by five different local governing agents seeking to fill a position recently created in a remote community. These agents exerted pressure on PN, threatening to revoke the partnership clause that allowed PN to work in their communities, causing in turn significant delays in the recruitment timeline, and more generally, on the project. These pressures and influences have also been experienced from national agencies who grant approval for development interventions and organisations to operate in Nepal:

> The main organisation is the Social Welfare Council [SWC] (…). And, for any of the projects that we commence from our side, before starting any project, before implementing any project, any project areas, we need to take approval from the SWC, it is the main body to take the approval of our things. It is the one that does the monitoring of our activities. (…) Many times, during SWC approvals, [PN senior staff] used to get threatened: 'You are not recruiting our person, why are you not recruiting my person?'. Many times, there was delay in our approval last year. (…) Always [the SWC] insist, like 'You must recruit this person, you must recruit'. (Devna, PN)

The SWC articulates the legal development framework, deciding which international organisations and agencies are allowed to work in Nepal and with which national organisations. In some instances, they play 'matchmaker', allowing or denying partnerships. Once a partnership is established and a project designed, the SWC have to grant approval for the implementation, a lengthy process which can cause significant delays. Throughout the project or at its end, the SWC proceeds with monitoring or evaluation with project beneficiaries to verify the alignment between the project design and its unfolding. The institution's pivotal functions[77] have led it to be considered 'like parents, like guardians' (interview quote from Bibek, PN).

---

[77] The SWC is considered the *shaper of development* in Nepal (diary entry 18/07/2019). If I initially considered the SWC's role and strength as a positive aspect of national agency in a power-infused sector – possibly enabling national organisations to reclaim some centrality in the development work carried out in Nepal – this was challenged over the course of the fieldwork. The SWC holds considerable authority over the development panorama: it can refuse INGO-NGO partnerships; it can impose local organisations to partner with specific INGOs willing to work in Nepal; it can determine an organisation's closure and block NGO and INGO bank accounts. The SWC also imposes conditions and modalities for development intervention such as the 40-60 framework: 40% of the intervention should be 'software' (training, capacity building, awareness-raising) and

To counter institutional intrusion, PN have developed a stringent two-phase recruitment process which consists of the vacancy announcement followed by a merit-based interview or test. When they were pressured by the five local governing agents, PN suggested that the candidates proposed by the local leaders first volunteer during a month, which would allow PN to identify the person most suited for the post. When none of the candidates appeared to volunteer, PN were relieved of the pressures exerted by the local leaders, and offered the position to the person who successfully underwent the recruitment process. Behind the argument of volunteering as a means to determine the motivation, skillsets and alignment with organisational values, this strategy was devised to counter the pressures and influence of the local governing agents, and to diffuse the tensions that could have undermined the entirety of the project. Such strategies have to be formulated as guidelines or organisational policies to become legitimate:

> After some time, there comes approval, but we do nothing… we only explain to them [our recruitment strategy], I mean: announce the vacancy, select on merit basis, and if your person comes in that merit basis, then that is the right option. (Devna, PN)

This shows how PN have to diplomatically negotiate issues of power, corruption and intrusion by stakeholders at multiple levels. Devising diverse strategies to deal with external pressures, such as developing stringent policies or not engaging with pressure, enables PN to endure problematic relations which could affect its sustainability.

Another example of action taken by PN concerns Meryl (see section 6.1.1) and the data collection that they instructed the national partners to carry out. When Meryl imposed sample surveys as the relevant method to be used across the programme, PN raised a number of concerns. Firstly, PN disagreed with sample surveys as an adequate vulnerability assessment method as they consider that vulnerability is too often understood as solely

---

60% 'hardware' (seeds, gas, farming equipment), whatever the scope and the aim of the project. For many stakeholders, these conditions do not align with the realities of development interventions in Nepal, and numerous interviews pointed to tensions and challenges in working with this development actor. The lengthy and heavy procedures that they impose total +1 year delay for UK charities from the point they wish to intervene in Nepal; according to PN, +1 month from the moment they submit all required documentation. PN have had to adjust to increased timelines in project implementation since the approval and revision processes are so constraining.

concerned with visible vulnerabilities, focused on physical impairments. Because of this stance, other types of less-visible or less-accepted disabilities and vulnerabilities are overlooked. Therefore, PN regard household censuses as a more suitable method to reveal hidden and multi-layered vulnerabilities, enabling intersectional analysis across economic, political, cultural, health and social issues. Secondly, sample surveys entail interacting predominantly with limited numbers of community leaders or other representatives, who might not be trained on vulnerabilities or disabilities; or who might have personal biases in the recognition of existing vulnerabilities due to social and cultural conventions. Thirdly, PN pointed to the lack of an agreed-upon definition of vulnerability across the project, or the use of an internationally-recognised framework for vulnerability assessment.

PN expressed these concerns drawing from their experiences in research in Nepal, and their work on vulnerability in marginalised communities. However, despite PN's experience in needs assessment, their expertise was not recognised:

> [Meryl] said 'this is the way' [sample survey]. It was very hard. I tried to convince them in the field visit also, and they just said 'No, no, no, not a census'. (…) We found some intermediate option, but not the sample way. (Kiran, PN)

These concerns were dismissed by Meryl's representative, who referred to issues of time and funding to push for programme implementation – a position taken in spite of PN's strong research expertise. During the data collection phase, PN chose to proceed with household censuses[78] and decided to apply the Washington Group Questions[79] throughout the data collection, rather than relying only on the number of government-issued disability cards as indicators of vulnerability, as recommended. In doing so, they sought to highlight the institutionalised processes which render vulnerabilities invisible, and to account for the vulnerabilities that would not have been accounted for in the sample surveys. These decisions led PN to report impressively higher numbers of identified vulnerable groups, and their data starkly contrasted with that of the other national partners.

---

[78] This method requires more time, more staff and more training than household censuses.

[79] The Washington Group Questions is a list of short questions aimed at identifying different disabilities. They can be found here: http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/short-set-of-disability-questions/, consulted on 31/07/2020.

With the aim to deliver relevant data, rather than following an inadequate methodological process, PN challenged the guidelines devised by Meryl. This act caused wider repercussions as the overall data could not be harmonised across the research partners (see Chapter 6). However, PN did legitimise household surveys as a relevant method for needs and vulnerability assessment. They chose to follow their methodological expertise rather than deliver flawed evidence, with the intent of disrupting the processes imposed by Meryl and shaping the effects of development interventions.

Other examples of strategies displayed by PN relate to the instances of covert negotiation[80] with development partners. This was the case for instance when PN were preparing the logframe with Poverty and Development (see section 6.1.3) to continue a project; Poverty and Development chose to draw on census data from 2011 to inform the project design, despite PN's concerns that these figures did not offer an accurate portrayal of the living conditions in the remote project areas. PN having worked with the communities were able to offer an updated perspective drawing from evidence collected throughout recent project implementation. Following consecutive pushbacks from the Poverty and Development representative, PN staff decided to acquiesce with the census data as the relevant evidence source in order to satisfy the partners' prerogatives. In relinquishing their expertise, PN sought to increase the probability of a positive funding outcome. This example of covert negotiation shows how PN decide to push certain agendas at different times of the partnership in order to ensure sustainability over equality.

In this section, responses developed by Southern partners to deal with complex power asymmetries in the relations with Northern partners entailed a complex and dynamic assortment of resistances and strategies developed across different spaces. From staff empowerment within the confines of organisational spaces, to the reclaiming of recruitment processes as a means to diffuse influence and pressure, to strategising covert negotiation, PN show how organisational resistance to sectoral power asymmetries includes a multitude of actions and non-actions to increase sustainability and manage the negative experiences

---

[80] I use the expression 'covert negotiation' to refer to the instances of partnership relations where project co-design infers strategic yet unformalised negotiation on the roles and contributions of each partner involved.

of partnerial relations. In the following section, I focus on the opportunities in considering more inclusive forms of 'being in partnership'.

7.1.2.4   Exploring new forms of alliances – problematising Southern perspectives on DPs

If partnerships have become the modus operandi for the sector, with rigid and archetypal discourses, assumptions and narratives being mobilised to frame and shape what stands for being in partnership (Brinkerhoff, 2002b; Baaz, 2005; Tomlinson, 2005; Schaaf, 2015; Girei, 2016), I am interested in how Nepali development stakeholders reclaim a critical perspective on DPs. In Chapter 5, I introduced Sang's functionalist conceptualisation of a partnership organised around the notion of functional or better/strong partnership: according to him, a strong partnership implies sustainability, good relations, shared ethos, objectives, and purpose; it also benefits the Southern partner through capacity-building.

A striking example was provided by Amir, who heads a CSO in Nepal which works in remote settings across Nepal. During our interview, he reminisced on a partnership between his organisation and an INGO:

> We worked [together] for about five years or so. This is a big organisation, not that big, but still, an international organisation. And I thought that, being an international organisation, [they would be very] professional, but then I came to realise how unprofessional they are. And how disorganised, around the concept of helping. Then I had to say 'No' at some point, 'It doesn't match, it doesn't match our approach, there is no intimacy in terms of helping people. (…) OK you have managers, a director, whoever, and he doesn't have that compassion, or that approach, and what we can partnership with'. It doesn't work, because sometimes, most of them, they always try to dominate, and they don't see if the objectives are met, but they see some kind of hierarchy: 'We are giving to you, you have got to do it how we want you to do it'. 'My friend, it doesn't work. We would rather not work together. I'm very fine, [my organisation] is very fine with that, because I think you should really understand the mindset here, we have a different approach. You should understand the people here, the country, the problem, then if you know all that (…) then I could

say 'OK', but you don't know anything. If on top of that, you say you have given $20,000, and every time you try to control in a way, a suspicious mind, that doesn't go'. (Amir, development stakeholder)

Amir's quote shows that the 'side effects' of the INGOs funding (domination, control, suspicion, hierarchical relations), the lack of value alignment (conceptual tensions around the notion of helping, lack of compassion) and the deficit in contextual understanding warranted the termination of the partnership. Throughout his interview, he reiterated the axiological foundations of his organisation and his commitment to the communities he works with (respect, trust, empathy, sustainability, empowerment, reciprocity). A central notion was that of 'intimacy', coupled with engagement and commitment to the communities. Amir's story illustrates how countering invisible power within his organisation involved 'individual consciousness to transform the way people perceive themselves and those around them, and how they envisage future possibilities and alternatives' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 29).

PN participants and other Nepali development workers that partook in the research focused on the quality of the relations (value-oriented) above the operationality of the relationship (efficiency-based) to define the relationship[81]. For southern partners, the DP experience involves hidden forms of power that can be eroded by an enforced axiological paradigm guiding and shaping the relations and practices. A value-based partnership is considered enabling, organised around inter-relational and inter-subjective principles of collaboration, whilst an efficiency-driven partnership leads to constraining practices and relations. Drawing from the empirical materials, I have developed the diagram below aimed at representing the dynamic relational spectrum experienced by Southern partners. This figure can serve as a heuristic device for DPs to critically examine relations and practices and as a tool to work collaboratively on shifting existing power asymmetries to more equal and sustainable DPs:

---

[81] Another analytical prism to apply here could be Weber's rationality concept, with the value-oriented perspective on DPs corresponding to *substantive rationality*, for which 'a value postulate implies entire clusters of values that vary in comprehensiveness, internal consistency, and content' (Kalberg, 1980, p. 1155); and the efficiency-based perspective on DPs approximating *formal rationality*, where 'decisions are arrived at "without regard to persons"' and where 'the bureaucratic form of domination' precedes 'because it aims to do nothing more than calculate the most precise and efficient means for the resolution of problems' (Kalberg, 1980, p. 1158).
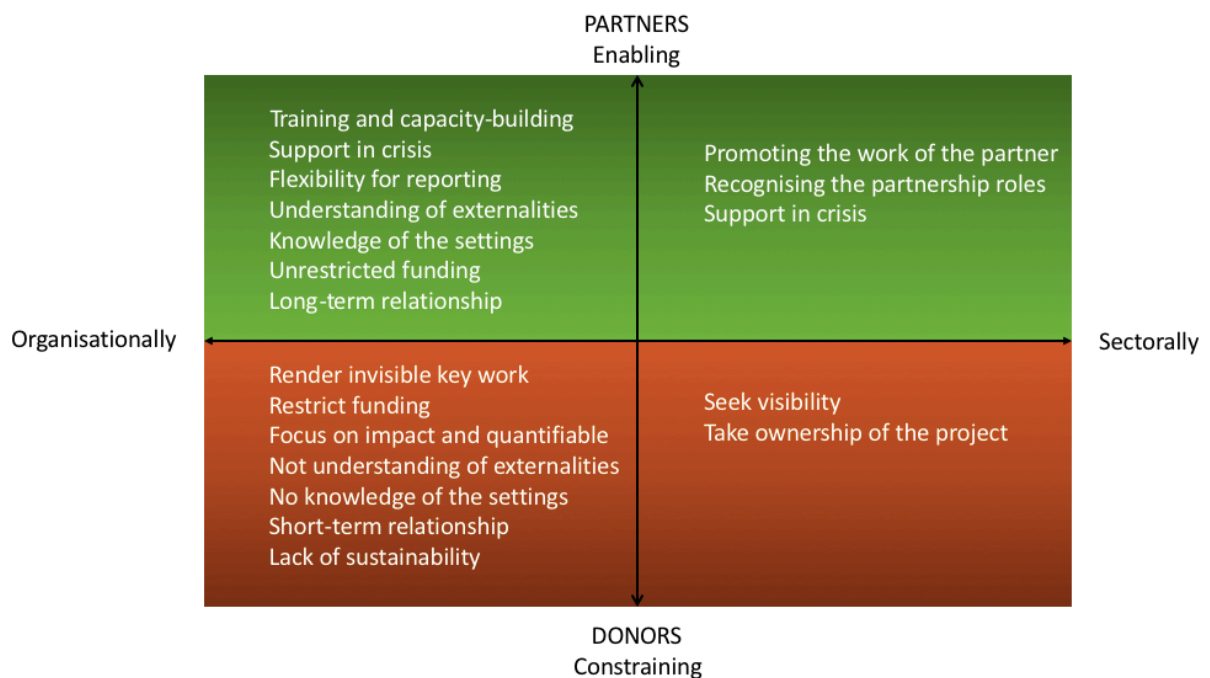
Figure 7: PN's donors/partners dynamic relational spectrum of DPs

Axiological principles of DPs play a central role for Southern partners (see Chapters 6 and 7). For PN, these involve similar value-sets to those described by Amir:

> In the root level, we don't feel that we share the same level of… what do you call? 'commitment'? on what, why we exist, with other organisations. That is why I feel some organisations are just funders, donors; but then, real partners who share… let me put this way: like… some really share the pain [that] all these people we want to work [with] are suffering from, from the organisational level, not only the individual level… (Sang, PN)

Of concern to Sang is the personal and organisational political commitment to the causes defended by PN. Amir described this as a sense of intimacy. What is sought from both Amir and Sang is for Northern partners to be allies of the work done and challenges experienced by Southern partners and the communities.

The individual and organisational positions of Amir, Sang, and PN more widely, have contributed to delineating imaginaries of 'future possibilities and alternatives' for DPs (Gaventa, 2006, p. 29) around the ways in which Northern organisations can 'be an ally' in development. In the context of development studies, I conceptualise 'being an ally' as the different supports that can be provided to individuals, groups or organisations that are marginalised and/or oppressed by the system by members of the oppressing groups, and the advocacy that the latter can carry out in their groups to challenge and reform given system. I am inspired by ongoing social movements calling for an increase in critical engagement on crucial issues of racism, power, and privilege.

These concerns were echoed by some Northern participants who expressed concerns at how DPs were currently being enacted. For instance, Amanda explains how she perceives the failings in Northern organisations' work in the development sector:

> Almost all the funding organisations are saying that they want to work in partnership but they're not doing it, because in partnership you would have to acknowledge that maybe your partner knows more about the subject than you do, and you would have to occasionally let them make the decisions, (…) and that is just not happening… (Amanda, PUK)

In this quote, Amanda joins Sang's value-oriented conceptualisation of partnership, arguing that working in partnership entails recognising the epistemic legitimacy of local partners. A value-oriented conceptualisation involves a number of features that she describes in the following quote:

> [How can Northern development stakeholders be supportive of Southern partners?]
>
> To be here, to be a liaison person, to help P[N] to implement the project, to go to the project area, to understand it, to talk directly to the target beneficiaries and the staff, and to support them in getting more money, to spread the message… surely, that should be the role of people like [expats working for INGOs]! Not to come here and to make [a senior management staff] redo a logframe! (…) That shouldn't be the role! (Amanda, PUK)

Amanda defines such support as the active, disruptive and advocacy roles that Northern partners ought to play within the development sector and in the relations that they entertain with their Southern partners. What she outlines recalls Colin's positionality in the partnership when he was facilitating access to important documents and information, and supporting PN in their funding applications (see section 7.1.1.4). What Amanda denounces when she mentions 'making a senior staff redo a logframe' is a common experience for PN, where development stakeholders forego their supportive role and micro-manage local partners to achieve project design that matches their level of involvement or funding (see section 6.1.3). She explains that being an ally should not be limited to supportive relations, but encompasses a broad range of changes at organisational and sectoral levels:

> From a conceptual, theoretical and general, practical, ethical, moral point of view, I think [any financial or technical support] should go directly to PN and not through an intermediary organisation. So like these DFID calls or the EU call we just did… you know, it was open to international NGOs and NGOs able to work in Nepal; and if it's open to Nepalese organisations, then I think the Nepalese organisation should be applying directly and should not have an international partner… (Amanda, PUK)

This quote refers to the EU call discussed in section 6.2.1.3 and the criticism made to middle organisations that absorb crucial development funding without clear role or mandates (see section 6.2.1.2). Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I met with a number of donors or previous donors who announced themselves as allies of the causes that PN defends. However, interviews with donors showed how despite self-proclamation of 'allyship', many were in fact complicit in the production of power asymmetries, and the strengthening of prejudiced assumptions on their Southern partner and the Nepalese context.

To better represent the value-based partnership focused on the notion of 'being an ally in DPs', I have expanded Figure 1 (introduced in Chapter 2, p. 48) to represent the axiological components discussed throughout this chapter:
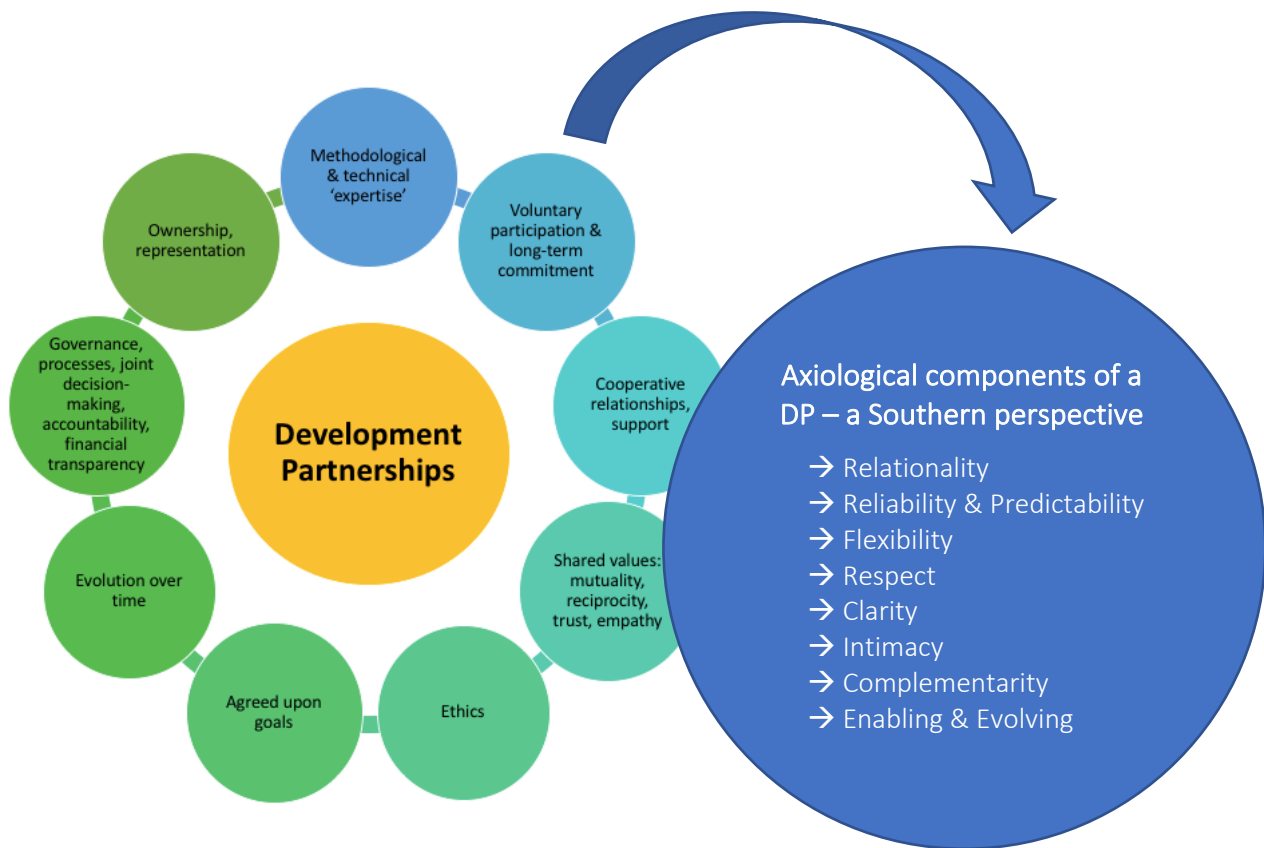
Figure 8: Axiological components of a DP – a Southern perspective

Being an ally in DPs supposes an endorsement of the value-based principles illustrated in this figure, by supporting advocacy work, organising ongoing education of Northern partners, reforming the sector and challenging embedded relations and practices. It also entails establishing and nurturing direct relations between development protagonists: by removing middle organisations from DP chains (thus removing 'surplus' development stakeholders), shorter funding streams would be enabled. In the case of GlobeHealing, Poverty & Development and a number of other partners, this would diminish experiences of friction loss for the staff, and issues of (mis)representation, appropriation and competing visibility.

Directly supporting local organisations without endorsing any Western-based development stakeholder was mentioned by a few participants as a way towards increased empowerment, agency and self-determination of Southern organisations. However, as pointed out by a number of UK participants, the sector is currently not set up to encourage

direct donations from the general public to local organisations in Southern countries, and Western-based CSOs still have a role to play in advocating and transferring needed funds to Southern contexts. What is at stake is how these Western-based CSOs critically engage with their role, status and privilege. In acknowledging organisational roles and responsibilities, being an ally in DPs shifts the onus from successful and efficient DPs to evolving, dynamic and political relationships that aspire to rectify power asymmetries and draw the contours for a sector where Southern partners are not objectified by the system and in which the perpetuation of neo-colonial relations and practices is tackled by all development protagonists.

This first part of the chapter has highlighted the different responses to power asymmetries in DPs. Each section displayed insights from participants on how to improve DPs and/or mitigate existing power relations: I started with efforts made by PUK and Northern development actors, before moving on to the different actions implemented by PN to counter experiences and effects of friction loss and power relations. Participants' voices brought to light the importance of endorsing a value-based approach to DPs to streamline more equal, respectful and sustainable relations and practices. The following section expands on the opportunities of a cross-dimensional power analysis to explore mitigation strategies.

7.2   Discussion: A pluralist analysis of power resistance

This section lays out the opportunities in applying a pluralist stance to analysing the ways in which power asymmetries are being mitigated by different development stakeholders. To do so, I have drawn from Foucault's notion of resistance which I discuss briefly in light of the research, and to which I have joined the ideas of authors who have worked on the empirical analysis of resistance and strategies, namely: Gaventa's Power Cube (2006), and Lilja and Vinthagen's types of resistance in function of the types of power (2014).

7.2.1 Conceptualising the power-resistance connection

Examining RQ3 through the actions taken by development stakeholders in mitigating power asymmetries in DPs inspired me to explore the strategies and resistances displayed by the participants in the DPs they engage in. For this, I draw on Foucault's conceptualisation of resistance. He defines resistance as 'a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used' (Foucault, 1982, p. 780). He conceptualises resistance as an intrinsic part of power: 'where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1978, p. 95):

'There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies.'

(Foucault, 1980, p. 142)

This theoretical stance resounded profoundly throughout the study: located within the production of power asymmetries (see Chapter 6), the empirical materials revealed a myriad of resistance examples. According to Foucault (1978), resistances have particular features: they play roles within power relations ('adversary, target, support, or handle'), they take on different forms ('spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent'), and produce different social effects. According to Foucault, 'in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations' (Foucault, 1982, p. 780).

Despite his concern with power relations and resistances, Foucault does not provide tangible methods or analytical tools to go forward with an empirical analysis of resistances (Mills, 2003; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). Rather, he lays out the theoretical contours for the understanding of power as relational and productive (see Chapter 3), and provides fairly

generalist pathways to analyse power relations that could inform on the roles, forms and/or effects of resistances (see Foucault, 1982, p. 792).

He does however outline key features of an analysis of resistance that supported me in shaping the pluralist stance I develop in the coming sections. Firstly, he recognises the *transversality* of struggles experienced in social relations: these manifest in 'the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification: struggles against the privileges of knowledge. But they are also an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and mystifying representations imposed on people' (p. 781). The transversality of struggles made resistances apparent in areas where I had not previously contemplated their emergence – Gaventa's Power Cube (2006) supported me in identifying resistances that had previously eluded my examination.

Secondly, Foucault (1982) advises that, 'to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations':

'I would like to suggest another way to go further toward a new economy of power relations, a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used.'

(Foucault, 1982, p. 780)

To do so, he proposes that the focus be on what forms of resistance are displayed to different techniques of power – this is the framework used by Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) that I discuss in the following section.

Finally, Foucault calls for an investigation of power relations where '"the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up' (p. 789). This

illuminating quote made me more attentive to different 'responses, reactions [and] results' which would not have been evidently examined as resistances.

7.2.2   A pluralist analysis of power-resistance in DPs

As suggested above, throughout this section, I examine power-resistance through two frameworks, namely: Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube, and Lilja and Vinthagen's (2014) resistance analysis. For this section, I found that Gaventa's Power Cube (2006) supported me in exploring the dimensions in which resistances are produced and manifest in DP relations.

7.2.2.1   *Exploring spaces and resistances to power in DPs*

Initially destined to serve as a conceptual tool to examine citizen participation, I have approached the Power Cube as a heuristic device to identify the multi-layered and multi-faceted dimensions in which power in development, impacting DPs, can be investigated and addressed. As seen in Chapter 3, the Power Cube is a three-faceted cube (levels, spaces and forms) (see Figure 4, p. 95) which, despite a rather static imagery, should be considered 'as a flexible, adaptable continuum, not as a fixed set of categories' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 28). The purpose of the cube is to be adapted to empirical examination, and as a heuristic device to examine power and social change (Gaventa, 2006; Pantazidou, 2012; Mcgee, 2016). I adjusted it to investigate DP relations and practices, focusing specifically on the spaces facet.

Spaces are represented in the Power Cube as closed; invited; claimed/created. Spaces stand for the 'opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships that affect their lives and interests' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26). In the context of this research, closed spaces represent the decision-making arenas such as the BoT, donor meetings or policy-making realms. Invited spaces refer to the organisations' conferences or other open development events. Created/claimed spaces deal with the ''organic' spaces that emerge 'out of sets of common concerns or

identifications' and 'may come into being as a result of popular mobilisation, such as around identity or issue-based concerns, or may consist of spaces in which like-minded people join together in common pursuits'' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27, citing Cornwall, 2002).

In keeping with other scholars and practitioners who have used the Power Cube in their research (see Chapter 3), I did not intend to examine all the dimensions it displays, but rather to focus on the dimensions most relevant to addressing RQ3: "How do DP stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?" Previous applications of the Power Cube in academic and practitioner realms (see Chapter 3 and also the examples cited in Gaventa, 2006) have demonstrated the richness of this device in analysing rapidly evolving, complex and high-stake empirical settings. What appealed to me with the Power Cube were the multi-focal prisms that can be investigated in a dynamic manner, which contribute to revealing new areas of power asymmetries and opportunities for change. Within the scope of RQ3, I have sought to utilise the Power Cube to identify and analyse tangible areas (where) for improvement, by highlighting the ways in which (how) development partners are already tentatively exploring new ways of relating, practicing and experiencing development as I discuss in the next section.

Highlighting the 'relationality of power' (Pantazidou, 2012, p. 11), I have used the cube to explore how dimensions interact and intersect to be simultaneously areas of power production and resistance. In doing so, I endeavoured 'to analyse and understand the changing configurations of power (…) [by] understand[ing] more about where and how to engage' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 23).

This was particularly the case with the concept of created/claimed spaces. The management meetings, for example, had been a central component of the fieldwork with PN, which I had primarily conceptualised as key created/claimed spaces 'where people gather to debate, discuss and resist, outside of the institutionalised policy arenas' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27). I envisaged these spaces as part of an organisational routine destined to monitor project implementation, and to ensure communication flow and transparency within the realms of senior staff working in the office. However, the complexity of the topics and the plurality of issues discussed on a daily basis, as well as the assistance provided by colleagues, rapidly suggested these meetings require a more cautious analysis. This brought me to examine PN's management meetings through the Power Cube as crafted/claimed spaces designed

by and for 'less powerful actors' as safe spaces to share and resist without the more powerful actors being involved (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27). These represented platforms to address common experiences and concerns which cannot be shared with donors.

I found that the management meetings should be approached as spaces of organisational resistance. They were neither formal nor informal: attendance at these meetings depended on availability, workload, presence within the offices' vicinity. They simultaneously provided a conduit for visibility of otherwise highly personal and hidden experiences of 'friction loss'; legitimacy and organisational support for any actions taken to mitigate the power asymmetries discussed; empowerment and support for the staff. The transversality of struggles addressed throughout these meetings concerned the privileges (and claims) of *knowledge, competence,* and *qualification* of Northern development stakeholders. Resistances developed to these struggles and power relations were not 'only a reaction or rebound' (Foucault, 1978, p. 96) – they signified the emergence of cautiously curated reflexive analyses of power asymmetries, assorted with creative or pragmatic responses to organisationally and individually address these.

According to Gaventa (2006), 'we must also remember that these spaces exist in dynamic relationship to one another, and are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transparency' (p. 27). This brought me to contemplate what other spaces might be examined as fostering resistance to DP power relations. PN's trainings soon arose as other examples of organisational resistance to epistemic injustice and exclusion. In supporting staff members to acquire skills, languages and knowledges oftentimes reserved to Northern development stakeholders (research, project management), PN staff were able to reclaim interactional spaces with donors and legitimately analyse how issues of power relations were being instrumentalised to advance institutional agendas.

The created/claimed spaces concept allowed me to identify other 'forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate [power] relations' (Foucault, 1982, p. 780) within PN where issues of friction loss and power asymmetries were being addressed, such as informal meetings between colleagues providing peer support; induction sessions during project handovers; and colleague banter and informal chats occurring throughout the office spaces.

The work of Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) aims to map out the power-resistance connections by examining what form of power (sovereign, disciplinary and biopower – see Chapter 3) produced what form of resistance. For this framework, the authors abide by Foucault's precept that power and resistance entertain dynamic relations in that 'forms of resistance [are] shaped by existing power relations but resistance also, paradoxically, reinforces and/or creates power relations' (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 111), and they articulate power and resistances as 'interconnected and entangled' (p. 111). I was particularly interested in the resistances produced in relation to disciplinary power.

Bhabha's (1994) notion of mimicry described as the processes through which the colonised becomes almost the same – but not entirely – as the coloniser, and the boundaries of otherness (Baaz, 2005; Peet and Hartwick, 2009; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). Mimicry was found to be particularly applicable as an analytical lens in the case of PN's ranking and weighing of DPs. In choosing to use measurement mechanisms and indicators deriving from traditional development management and performativity assessment, PN used the tools usually mobilised by Northern development stakeholders to assess the quality and the worthiness of DPs. Similarly, in the case of Amir's story recounting how he had decided to terminate a DP with an INGO, he positioned himself in a role of assessor against values and ethics that he considered primordial in the work of his NGO.

Resistances to disciplinary power can also be explored as the strategies destined to avoid retaliative measures and enforce interests. This was seen for instance when PN declared to GlobeHealing's national representative: 'It's your job, tell us, continue what you're doing, manage PN's team, that works well for us. You can continue criticising, you can continue redefining, you can continue putting us back onto the track, you're doing your job' (section 6.2.2.1). Whilst it may appear PN are enjoining GlobeHealing to continue problematic practices and relations, they are in fact displaying points of resistance that are simultaneously *interested* and *sacrificial* (Foucault, 1978, p. 96). GlobeHealing had repeatedly mentioned how complex the relations with PN were, and tensions between the national representative and specific PN staff were jeopardising the overall project.

267

Operating 'without strong capacities for exercising countervailing power against the 'rules of the game' that favour entrenched interests' (Gaventa, 2006, p. 30), PN chose to 'surrender the lead to [GlobeHealing]' (diary entry 04/05/2019) as a resistance strategy to mitigate ongoing conflict. This was an interested decision, aimed at maintaining as stable a relation as the conditions permitted, in an attempt to reach the end of the project. By doing this, 'the power of [prospective] discipline [was] met by forms of resistance that challenge through avoiding, rearticulating discourses and by destabilising the institutional control of behaviour' (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 114). These forms of resistance also include passivity and avoidance (Scott, 1990) which were clearly displayed through the meetings I observed between PN and GlobeHealing.

Another perspective of interest lies with Foucault's 'techniques of the self' described as 'the practices through which individuals inhabit subject positions and transform existing subjectivities' (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 116). Techniques of the self take on different forms, such as 'diaries, confessions, therapy, diet, daily training schedules, etc.' (p. 116) and aim to create a sense of autonomy and self, whilst promoting self-reflection and self-examination. The trainings and management meetings can be seen as techniques of the self in so far as they provide spaces and opportunities to critically recreate meaning of the subjugation experienced throughout DPs. Thereby, they offer a platform for experiences to be retold and examined 'in a personalised way that gives another story of who you are and that attempts to reconstruct habits and abilities' (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014, p. 116).

In this section, I show how a pluralist analysis of power-resistance enables one to bring to light strategies, efforts and actions developed by Southern partners to mitigate power asymmetries produced in DPs. Gaventa's power cube showed how created and claimed spaces become instrumental in crafting resistances in spaces removed from the influence of the powerful. Examining the production of resistances to disciplinary power with Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) offered insights in the ways mimicry, avoidance, passivity and reflexivity were mobilised by Southern partners to ensure the perpetuation of DPs.

Conclusion

Addressing RQ3: "*How do development stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?*" necessitated in the first instance an integrative analysis of power asymmetries operating across different dimensions. This was the focal point of RQ1 and RQ2 that I discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 where I laid out the production of power that impacts DPs through a narrational and thematic analysis.

Throughout section 7.1, I outlined areas where the Northern partner can, at individual, organisational, partnerial and sectoral levels, address power asymmetries. I then investigated the differentiated weight of power asymmetries on Southern partners and the strategies developed and implemented by Southern partners to support their staff. Finally, I argued how shifting the onus from 'being in partnership' to 'being an ally in partnership' could broaden our imaginary of partnership as a non-finite mode of collaboration, an opportunity to critically and iteratively reconsider postures, beliefs, relations, communications, practices and engagement in DPs'.

In section 7.2, the discussion focused on the opportunities of using the Power Cube as a heuristic device to analyse the organisational spaces where resistances were produced to challenge power asymmetries experienced by Southern partners. I followed with an examination of resistances displayed to disciplinary power. Neither of the resistances displayed by PN (ranking, weighing the benefits, management meetings vs challenges of DPs, staff training on friction loss) are visible to external development protagonists, neither have they been designed for or with them. By devising spaces to experience and facilitate countervailing power to entrenched sectoral power, staff reclaim a voice, identity and self-esteem.

CHAPTER 8:   CONCLUSION AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters, DPs play a crucial role in international development. Framed around values of trust, reciprocity and mutuality, their aim is to deliver interventions to support the achievement of social justice. Taking place between organisations located in the Global North and the Global South, DPs have been shown to display issues of power in relations between the partners. This final chapter aims to draw out concluding reflections on the various processes which have constituted this research. Firstly, I review how the findings have responded to the RQs devised together with the participants. Secondly, I discuss learnings from the methodological approach, including empirical and critical reflections on data processing, analysis and theorising, and the opportunities and challenges of CPAR for organisational and development studies. Finally, I outline the main contributions of this research to different bodies of knowledges, before laying out avenues for further research.

8.1   Key Research findings

This thesis has explored the ways in which power asymmetries, produced throughout and constitutive of DPs, are multifaceted and generated throughout differentiated relations and practices across the sector. In order to analyse this, the research sought to respond to the three following RQs:

RQ1: How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of international development?

RQ2: How are power asymmetries navigated in development partnerships?

RQ3: How can development partnerships be improved towards more sustainability and equality?

To address these, I drew from Chapters 2 and 3 which offered insights on the pervasiveness of power and privilege in development, and the ways in which these issues manifest today, through narratives, relations and practices of development. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 were dedicated to the analysis of the empirical findings produced throughout the research. For these, I developed a thematic and interpretive analysis drawing from post-/decolonial, feminist and Southern theories and authors.

Throughout the findings chapters, I engaged with three key themes: how conceptualisations of partnerships are fraught with expectations, assumptions and agendas, that in turn shape the enactment of DPs which are fraught with power issues; how partnerial relations and practices are dominated by power asymmetries between Northern development stakeholders and Southern partners, including the different strategies displayed by partners to mitigate the effects of power at individual, organisational and sectoral levels; and finally, the ways in which DPs can be improved towards more equality and sustainability. I review the key learnings from the findings chapters below.

8.1.1   Partnership conceptualisations through the prism of narratives

To address **RQ1***: How are partnerships between CSOs based in low and high-income countries conceptualised and enacted in the field of international development?* I analysed partnership narratives. At first, the SDP narratives appeared harmonious, instilling a sense of homogenised relations throughout the partnership, drawing on notions of equality, horizontality, shared ideal and kinship. Unifying narratives were structured around the ideal of the partnership operating as a family and relied on supportive arguments such as a mutual

history, a shared concern for social issues, a long-lasting dedication to similar concerns, an overarching partnership identity and strong bonds of friendship. This narrative also sought to foster a sense of power balance – or at least, point to the fact that visible and tangible power imbalances that might occur in other DPs through sheer size, staff and income, were in this case revoked, leading to a more equitable partnership. In the midst of ongoing controversies and widespread criticism towards NGOs[82], the differentiating narratives served two purposes: they acted to hamper commonly made criticism towards big international NGOs, and they served to discern between PUK acting as a partner and other development stakeholders acting as donors. This demarcation played a central role in shaping the identity and the communications around the partnership.

In order to advance a sense of harmony within the partnership, differentiating narratives were mobilised to signify a distinction between the SDP and other DPs. The distinction made referred to the fact that, contrary to the trend in ID, the SDP is constituted of a small charity in the North and a large NGO in the South; its aim was to position the partnership aside from the more conventional DPs in order to extend and reinforce the harmonious ideal of the partnership. Combined with the unifying narratives, the differentiating narratives propose a controlled image of an accessible, human-size and value-centred charity with an aim to empower its Southern partner.

However, as argued by Baaz (2005), 'development cooperation is characterized by different and conflicting interests' (p. 75), and harmonious relationships based on narratives which suggest horizontality and equality fail to account for the power asymmetries that are inherent in and constitutive of the development sector. This was clearly found through the examination of PN's narratives which focus on the modalities and conditions of enabling and constraining relations and practices of DPs. For PN, the onus is not so much on the unifying or the differentiating narratives, but rather on contrasting narratives that allow them to determine the quality of and the value alignment in DPs. The contrast operates between organisations that act as partners vs those that act as donors, which resulted in the shaping

---

[82] In 2016 and 2017, scandals concerning Oxfam and Save the Children (in among many other INGOs) were widely reported in the media, and led NGOs to critically revise their safeguarding and governance processes. Initially focused on sexual misconduct, abuse and unequal power relations between expats and local partners, the scandals expanded to critically debating the worth of INGOs and the development sector as a whole. These scandals were referred to by participants throughout the course of the fieldwork and statements were made about the differences between P and other such organisations.

of the relational spectrum. The spectrum was drawn upon by all participants throughout interviews as a narrational tool to critically assess and categorise partners (although its conceptualisation was not formalised in most instances).

These three types of narratives were conceptualised using the heuristic device of the imaginaries of symbiosis. The imaginaries of symbiosis played a critical role in fostering adherence, loyalty and commitment to the partnership project. However, they also presented power asymmetries as an appendage of relations and practices that are otherwise unproblematic and unchallenged. The co-constructed nature of these narratives led me to explore the intersubjective and contextual components of the narrational formation, mobilisation and circulation. These revealed to what extent partnership narratives are infused with issues of voice, representation, and political concerns around naming and meaning-making. The narratives are active and dynamic, underpinned by symbolic language such as myths, anecdotes, stories (Ybema *et al.*, 2009), but also strongly shaped by global development agendas.

The ideals of symbiosis can only survive in a vacuum, as was seen when the SDP was confronted with external and internal partnerial changes which strongly compromised their continuity (2015 earthquakes and DFID grant). Although the breakdowns in trust and solidarity discussed in Chapter 5 were narratively associated to the DFID and earthquake events, wider issues and assumptions around dependency, power asymmetries and organisational agency underpinned the partnerial relations and practices. Other factors informed on the strategisation of the imaginaries of symbiosis towards organisational agendas (the partnership expansion for example). I conceptualised the belief that founded and motivated such organisational agenda the 'imaginary of fracture' which stands for the increased attention and focus on singular organisational strategies beyond the partnership dynamic. The fact that the imaginary of fracture ensued from the trust breakdown shows to what level the existing narratives were reactive to external events and evolved to represent the interests of dominant voices involved in the SDP.

Chapter 5 showed how partnership narratives shape the ways in which DPs are conceptualised, but also how they are enacted. Throughout the chapter, I demonstrated how the concept of partnership is dynamic, inherently connected with sets of practices and relations. In neglecting to critically examine how the narrational ruptures detrimentally

affected the SDP, problematic relations and practices were continued, which in turn intensified power issues. The ruptures in the narratives represented the non-acceptable, not-discussed, hidden and problematic issues which encroached on the partnership relations and practices. Thus, the narratives were simultaneously a conduit for a value-centred vision of the partnership, focused on notions of reciprocity, kinship, horizontality, and intimacy, and a site of power with issues of control, ownership, accountability, dependency produced, and which shaped the relations and the practices of DPs. Using the imaginaries of symbiosis revealed the scope for analysing the conceptualisation of development partnerships at partnerial level, and between the organisations involved in the SDP and external development stakeholders.

8.1.2 Production and effects of power asymmetries in DPs

In Chapter 6, I discussed **RQ2:** *How are power asymmetries produced in the development sector, and how do these influence the modalities, relations and practices of DPs?* The chapter was organised in three key sections. Firstly, I devised vignettes developed around fieldwork experiences, which portrayed the multifaceted production of power asymmetries as part of the relations and practices of DPs. For this purpose, I chose four DPs involving PN to represent the diversity of power issues produced throughout partnership relations. Issues included power claims and domination from the Northern partner, unequal accountability processes, and control and conditionalities over funding transfer. In practice, these power asymmetries manifested through specific incidents around competition for visibility and reputation (including conflation, amalgamation, appropriation, misrepresentation, omission, false ownership claims); rendering invisible key workload or adding responsibilities, tasks and costs without accommodating for the changes the additional work would induce; invalidating local knowledges, experiences and expertise; friction loss; hierarchical relations and top-down decision-making; as well as overt threats and invisible and/or intangible power manifestations such as inaction, non-negotiation, unpredictability.

Secondly, I drew on Barnett and Duvall's (2005) power taxonomy and its three forms of power: compulsory, institutional and structural. Starting with compulsory power, I examined

direct control and influence manifested throughout DPs, and namely covert and overt threats made by development stakeholders, and how these skew the actions and margins of manoeuvre of Southern CSOs. Moving onto institutional power, I explored the ways in which power was being devolved to middle organisations that hamper the implementation of project interventions. Middle organisations play a crucial role as they absorb development funding, extend chains of command and constitute an additional interlocutor in already densely packed development relations. In doing so, they compromise transparent relations and negotiations between Southern partners and Northern development stakeholders. Finally, I focused on how capacities and resources are shaped and allocated in DPs – structural power. For this form, I chose the example of the EU funding call that was directed specifically to CSOs working in Nepal which resulted in competing and exclusionary relations between INGOs and local CSOs who were contending for high-level funding.

These three forms of power have to be approached in a connected and inter-related manner, as each example could be analysed through the different forms. The contributions of Barnett and Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of power for the analysis of DP relations brought to light the multiple and heterogeneous ways in which power is produced throughout the sector, and how it detrimentally affects the ways in which Southern partners engage in DPs.

I then moved onto a postcolonial analysis of these different manifestations of power asymmetries. I focused on five concomitant issues: stereotyping, essentialising, representing, politics of ownership, and sector level exclusionary practices. The exercise brought to light the extent to which colonial discourses weigh in the representations of peoples from low-income settings as intrinsically inferior, incapable, inadequate and irrelevant. Sectoral exclusions were reported as instrumental in the access to spaces of decision-making and in negotiations with key Northern development stakeholders.

Combining these theoretical frameworks showed the extent to which power asymmetries were produced throughout every interaction, relation and practice, and more widely, are constitutive of the sector. Such an exercise was not identified in existing empirical studies drawn upon for this thesis. Mostly, power analysis in the development sector is conceptualised through the 'power over' prism (such as Lister, 2000; Crawford, 2003; Elbers and Schulpen, 2011). When multidimensional prisms have been drawn upon (see section 3.3.1), these are not combined with postcolonial theories. In bringing together Barnett and

Duvall's taxonomy of power and postcolonial studies to respond to RQ2, and analyse the production and effects of power asymmetries in DPs, I found that both approaches brought to light specific occurrences, incidents and issues of power imbalances that would otherwise have been overlooked. Thus, associating different perspectives has proven throughout this study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of power asymmetries in DPs.

8.1.3   Strategies and resistances to mitigate power asymmetries in DPs.

Chapter 7 was dedicated to **RQ3:** *How do development stakeholders mitigate the effects of power asymmetries in DPs?* and focused on the different actions and efforts make by different development protagonists to address these power relations highlighted in the preceding chapter. In examining the actions taken by Northern development stakeholders to challenge or address power asymmetries, I focused on four key opportunities in mitigating DP power asymmetries: rendering funding more predictable, flexible and reliable; partnership communications, and the benefits in transparent, honest and open conversations on complex topics; education for Northern development stakeholders, which plays a crucial role in determining the direction, narratives and strategies of the partnership; and finally, the opportunities in mitigating power asymmetries in DPs from the perspective of an individual Northern development stakeholder. Although these actions might be discussed rapidly in grey literature in a rather prescriptive form on 'how to improve your partnership', such recommendations are mostly destined to Northern development stakeholders with little examination of the tangible changes such actions make in existing relations and practices. I have found no academic literature specifically outlining how such actions are being enforced or enacted in DPs to mitigate power asymmetries.

Thus, this empirical study provides tangible insights into how sector-wide mobilisation and commitment can result into the breakdown of colonial beliefs around the capacity of Southern partners to possess agency, situated knowledges and self-determination. During the fieldwork, I uncovered how key individuals were actively shaping and mobilising these colonial beliefs, and how stereotypical assumptions affected views and beliefs about partnerships as a whole, as well as decision-making processes internally. With DPs emerging

throughout the empirical findings as pivotal nodes of power production, infused with superiority, authority and control, adjusting the ways in which DPs are enacted was seen as a compelling way to improve development relations and practices towards embodying greater equality and respect. Professional postures are strongly informed by personal and political stances; thus, the role of individuals within the sector in debunking attitudes such as those described in Chapter 5 and 6, and building more equitable and sustainable DP relations and practices, is essential.

I then examined the different types of actions displayed by PN. These include the creation of spaces such as the management meetings and trainings dedicated to empowering staff, managing the effects of friction loss, and co-learning on donor relations. They also entail the development of organisational strategies such as ranking and weighing DPs to accommodate workloads and intersubjective experiences of donor relations, but also how DPs are valued against the benefits that could be reaped by PN, such as organisational visibility and prospective development. In some instances, forms of action or inaction were strategised to advance an organisational agenda. Actions were developed to address relations and practices that affect the Southern partners in their programmatic, strategic and daily operations: in creating alternative spaces where Northern stakeholders are not involved, the organisation supports critical, reflexive and empowering spaces for its staff, thereby promoting collective action to reclaim voice and agency.

Other types of actions included diplomatic negotiation when threats, tensions or conflicts emerged with development partners; relinquishing methodological and technical expertise for the benefit of DP preservation and continuation; amending recruitment strategies and other governance protocols so as to ensure fair and transparent relations with the communities; and deliberate (temporary or sustained) inaction with partners who were attempting to skew organisational and recruitment processes. Thus, Southern partners presented a threefold approach in the navigation of power asymmetries in DPs: a creative/active stance, a safeguarding one, and a passive/pragmatic one. The combination of these three approaches provided PN with tangible strategies to address the pervasive power asymmetries experienced in their development work.

I closed the empirical analysis by examining critically what 'being in partnership' conveys for Southern partners. PN's research team and research trainings simultaneously symbolise

organisational empowerment but also provide the NGO with the means to interact tangibly and to influence the settings they work in, with the support of robust and/or reliable data which allow for the development of contextually-relevant evidence and responses. Recent collaborations and partnerships with academic institutions have equipped PN with strong ties and expertise in research methodology. This provides the potential for the organisation to enjoy a broader future, where project design and implementation constitute only part of the work that is carried out in Nepal, heightening their profile, their influence on development interventions, and the ways they can challenge development as it is currently conceptualised and practiced there.

This all led me to consider what *actually* constitutes a partnership. Drawing on the evidence emerging from the study, I came to understand 'being in partnership' as currently lacking in ethical, ontological, epistemological and philosophical meaning, with narratives, relations and practices infused with power asymmetries. I found that strong personal, political and professional engagement were the foundation for improved DPs: I conceptualised this argument as 'being an ally in partnership', an axiological posture which entails individuals, organisations, and the sector more widely, challenging engrained norms and beliefs.

Throughout the analysis of the three RQs, this thesis laid out the different avenues for critical reflection on how partnerships in ID are enacted and can be improved towards more sustainability and equality. Drawing from the rich empirical materials, I have drawn out the contours for practical, organisational, sectoral and theoretical change to the modalities of DPs. In the following section, I share reflexive insights on the limitations of this research.

8.1.4   Limitations of the research

This research resulted in many outcomes and actionable insights on power asymmetries in DPs. The participants reported enthusiasm over the topic of the research, and were excited to learn from the findings to improve the DPs they were involved in. Over the course of the research, the co-production was dynamic and yielded rich and broad empirical materials. However, it is important at this point to acknowledge that the research also presents a number of limitations which need to be analysed in order to improve this work. Whilst some

of these limitations are unavoidable (and intrinsic to qualitative research of this kind), others offer scope for future research, as I develop below.

A first limitation lies with the time and scale of the CPAR: working with two organisations over the course of a 12-month period suggests that I can only represent but a snippet of power asymmetries, relations and practices, and strategies and resistances displayed by the partners of the research. In an attempt to represent as many of these, the data were examined over a lengthy period through a conjunction of analytical stances (theoretical, philosophical, methodological and ethical). However, the findings should be contextually and temporarily situated, and further research engaging more participants, more CSOs, more donors over a longer period of time are necessarily to be envisaged to represent broader experiences of power asymmetries in DPs.

A second limitation connects with the CPAR enactment[83] and is broken down into three points: firstly, CPAR is concerned with the research knowledge holders, makers and enactors. In co-produced research, there is a commitment to challenging and rupturing the hegemonic knowledge belongings (elites). However, in order to obtain a PhD, the ultimate output is the written thesis. I was compelled to produce findings and knowledge to match academic norms for measurable impact. The process towards delivering this research is lengthy, costly and time-consuming. Yet, such a product is far removed from the organisations' schedules and preoccupations. Participation of all at all stages of the research, as per CPAR, was therefore not always aligned nor realistic with organisational lifespan. My personal and professional stakes with the CPAR enactment were different from those of the partners, and it required ongoing commitment and attention to align these stakes as much as possible.

Following, the initial methodology focusing on AR was amended by myself to reflect my political positioning in critical development and organisational studies; this was perhaps not shared across the entirety of the partner organisations, although a few participants were clearly enthusiastic about such an approach. I had conceptualised CPAR as an 'absolute' methodology, with the aim to enact it as 'purely' as possible throughout the entirety of the

---

[83] Excerpts from this section are drawn from *Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey* (Westerveld, 2019).

research. However, I find I can only account for fragments of CPAR played out through processes or relations or micro-instances, with an array of other methodological modalities on the spectrum from AR to CPAR. Therefore, methodological fluidity (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016) was a fundamental learning from this research. An organic 'pick and mix' approach, in between ethnographic and CPAR methods seemed more relevant.

Finally, I have not found any other empirical studies using CPAR in development and/or organisational and management studies. Oftentimes, CPAR was experiential and experimental, based entirely on the *in-situ* dynamics between myself and participants/settings; drawing from the ongoing reflexive stance I adopted throughout the course of the research (see sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.2) allowed me to critically reflect and share back with participants and my supervisors on the progress of CPAR. However, benefitting from other academic or practitioner records of CPAR could have supported the CPAR unfolding. For this reason, I choose to share an expansive reflective account of CPAR methods in the following sections.

A third limitation arose from the global pandemic outbreak and its impacts on the research. CPAR as it had been conceptualised and practiced throughout the research until then was halted, and needed to be modified considerably. The focus of the participants and PN was not on the outcomes of the research, but rather on how to deal with the return of a humanitarian crisis so shortly after having re-entered a development 'status' post-earthquakes. In this context, PN and PUK had to redesign their fundraising and implementation strategies to appear competitive to new funding calls and new donors wanting to partake in pandemic relief. A dissemination field trip organised for April 2020 which involved presenting preliminary findings at PN's bi-annual conference and a presentation of an academic paper at the Martin Chautari conference in Kathmandu were cancelled. Findings sharing, dissemination and research impact required to be reassessed with both organisations. This is a key limitation of co-produced and critical research, as I was not provided with feedback or insights on the preliminary findings by the participants.

The Covid-19 pandemic has already heavily impacted the development sector, with UK charities seeing a critical decline in funding, increased demands for services, and cuts to staff and resources; and CSOs suffering from sectoral funding cuts and the effects of the global economic crisis (BOND, 2020; Charities Aid Foundation, 2020; Kenley and Whittaker, 2020).

Combined with Brexit, ODA cuts, a global recession, and continued expected decline in income over 2021-2022, the sustainability of NGOs is compromised, leading to 48% of such bodies expecting to cease operations in the coming 24 months (BOND, 2020).

At SDP level, PUK and PN have had to modify their operations, with reduced staff and aborted fundraising events in the UK; and increased health-related interventions in Nepal, leading to a withdrawal of other planned activities. Issues of funding flexibility, reliability and predictability are key for the Southern partner in ensuring more equality and sustainability – this was clearly demonstrated throughout this thesis – whereas issues around organisational perpetuation and growth are central to the strategies of Northern partners. With the intensification of the aforementioned challenges, DP strategies and sustainability are expected to deteriorate, possibly to the detriment of Southern organisations. How the sector will accommodate for increased threats without resorting to escalating power relations and practices, exacerbated by financial, material, operational and technical challenges, will inform the scope for DP improvement.

Finally, the current governance changes in Nepal are also a key component that could render the findings of this study obsolete, were DP relations and practices to change as a result of the inclusion of new development protagonists. The federalisation transition is thought to have the potential to critically influence the ways in which Southern partners will intervene in remote communities, with the latter partaking more actively in the design of tailored and contextually-relevant development interventions for example, and being able to contribute to funding elements of the interventions in the optic of sustaining activities beyond the end of a project.

In the following section, I present a reflexive and critical account of the experience of the CPAR enactment throughout the course of this project. I outline the learnings that have emerged from this methodological approach, as well as the challenges and opportunities for CPAR in development studies.

8.2 A critical and reflexive examination of the methodology

The methodology was a central and iterative facet of the entirety of the research. As a co-constructed and co-produced collaborative and reflective process, the methodology constituted an ongoing platform for critical learning on the opportunities and limitations of applied and participatory research in developing settings, and with organisations working in ID.

8.2.1 Data co-production processes

In this section, I focus in particular on three methods – interviews, OTR and diarying, as described in Chapter 6 – and examine how they were enacted as part of the CPAR, with insights on their relevancy for applied and participatory research.

8.2.1.1 Interviews

In this section, I reflect on the 'interview exiting' strategy (see section 4.2.1.3). Interviews were organised in the final weeks of the fieldwork in each setting, and often I was carrying out several interviews per day. Invitations for abstraction and their 'closing' statement were devised as a means to respond to some of the concerns, criticism or frustrations enounced throughout the interview; they offered the opportunity to move from the descriptive and narrational flow of the interviews, and instead mobilise a fresh outlook on issues that were considered entrenched and provoked demotivation. They created a 'breather' from the rest of the interview; an opportunity to project towards a fruitful situation.

Participants mentioned after the interview that they had written down the recommendations they had made to themselves from the abstract repositioning. They reflected on the interviews and that specific question as *empowering*, *beneficial*, a *space to consider things [they] never had the time to think about* (participants' comments). However,

during one interview, the invitation for abstraction was not understood, and caused the participant to feel uncomfortable. The individual had articulated complaints about organisational processes which I expected could lead to some insightful thoughts and possibly highlight opportunities for reflection or action (as had been the case in other instances where the invitations for abstraction had resulted in tangible and pragmatic decision-making or critical reflection). Instead, this interviewee found themselves unable to articulate abstraction or to envision a different outcome to the issues expressed, and felt confounded and dissatisfied with the outcome of the interview. This emotion did not persist, and during further informal conversations, they shared that they had found some benefits to the interview, which had led them to reflect on issues that had felt overwhelming at that time.

However, reflecting on this experience led me to consider abstraction as an epistemological and ontological construct that should not be replicated across interviews or settings without cautious consideration. I became substantially more attentive to the ways in which I brought the invitation going forward. I also realised that by virtue of the interview being a co-constructed, interactive and inter-subjective space, I was required to pay very close attention not only to protecting the participants, but also to enabling the space to be safe and empowering. It felt fundamental that I not cause a sense of failure or inadequacy in participants, as this would have cultivated the asymmetrical researcher/participant relations that CPAR aims to challenge.

8.2.1.2   Off the record

Turning next to OTR (see Chapter 4), this strategy was instigated with the intention of addressing and ameliorating individual concerns about organisational and sectoral expectations. Sometimes, OTR was prompted by my questions, and in other moments, it was used *a posteriori* (usually at the end of the interview), with participants vocalising concern about the impact their sharing might have on existing relations or on their role. In one instance, a participant asked to read the transcript a few months after the interview, as they wanted to add new OTR segments.

OTR was devised to ensure freedom of speech but also participant agency. In no ways did it deter from the intrinsic data protection and confidentiality of sensitive research (see Chapter 4). OTR was however an ongoing negotiation: it was used by half of the participants, and in the case of one interview, added up to almost half of the discussion time. At the beginning, OTR proved challenging as it dealt with issues of power imbalances which seemed essential to the research. I found that some experiences did not appear problematic or requiring OTR, overlooking the participants' personal and professional experiences; mainly, I was worried I was losing precious material for the write-up. Using diarying as a means to express frustrations and contradictions surrounding OTR revealed the misalignment I was embodying between facilitating an empowering CPAR, and the doctoral experience which enjoins the production of empirical contributions and impact. OTR represented my fears of not being able to merge axiological values of CPAR and doctoral expectations – what if *the* finding resides in the OTR?

In relation to multivocality (see Chapter 4), OTR took on a new life and epitomised the *intersubjective relation* and the *mutual collaboration* reflexivity variants. OTR became a tangible manifestation of incoherence and inconsistency (Hollway, 1989). Some participants' interviews showed high levels of allegiance to sectoral or organisational discourses, highlighting the internalised power/knowledge nexus articulated by Foucault (1980). I sometimes found myself the spectator to a 'fixed-performance'[84] which upheld the official narrative of the partnership story. OTR, and the dynamic negotiation towards OTR, highlighted the reticence that participants had in challenging organisational practices or relations, in discussing specific governance issues, or in affirming their own views on how problems could be remedied. OTR was the window into the unspoken and the socially or organisationally unacceptable. It hinted at hierarchies that were fundamental in the power/knowledge authority that I could not infiltrate due to my position, the language, or the length of the research. It conflicted with the dominant and legitimated discourses, offering a step-aside through the formation of counter-narratives which could only exist *through* and *as a result* of OTR.

---

[84] 'Fixed-performance' was inspired from Ybema *et al.*'s (2009) 'fixed-stage' (p. 8) that describes the homogeneous accounts shared to portray a uniform organisational reality. These are reminiscent of Goffman's (1971) 'back-stage' and 'front-stage' notions of performance and presentations of self in social settings (discussed in Baaz, 2005, p. 16).

Soon, however, I realised that OTR was a central element in better understanding repeated accounts of tensions, be they inter-organisational or inter-individual. They offered precious insights into the partnership history, dynamics or turning points which were not retrievable through any other primary or secondary data sources. I found that having previous OTR in mind allowed me to form new questions. What had appeared deeply personal to some participants, whispered in hushed voice, articulated in physical crispation, or emotionally triggering, was mentioned by others without resorting to OTR. Most OTR fragments were shared in subsequent interviews as a flowing part of the discussion. Using OTR proved an interesting, dynamic data generation process; it actually enabled single-method triangulation with multiple accounts describing events or relations. It created a sense of safety and confidentiality for the participants, and enhanced their openness throughout the interview; and in turn, it allowed me to access paramount information on the partnership.

8.2.1.3   Diarying[85]

Diarying proved invaluable: at the end of some interviews (lengthy, and sometimes upsetting or emotional for participants, and in some instances myself) or days, I found myself relying on the reflexive journaling to unveil the dynamics that had emerged, and untangle my personal feelings. Journaling proved crucial as I critically reflected on the tensions that I was experiencing *as a researcher*, which led me to realise how these worries contrasted with personal experiences *as a research participant* which I had found exposing. Conflicting emotions of (individual or organisational) loyalty, OTR tensions, inter-individual discomfort, and co-optation attempts were brought to the surface and allowed me to critically review my role and responsibilities in the interview enactment and other instances of the research. It also allowed me to realise that these were a token of CPAR; I was a part of the real-world issue, and invited to articulate my own views on it.

Practically, diarying took over two hours on busy days, when I logged meetings, informal conversations with participants, interview processes, the impact of the fieldwork on the

---

[85] Excerpts from this section are drawn from *Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey* (Westerveld, 2019).

research progress etc. Daily journaling was versatile, and the content varied, depending on days, moods and interactions. Some days, the notes were succinct, other days lengthy. The nature of the journaling was in turn descriptive, poetic, introspective, reflective, (self-) critical, analytical, emotional, factual. Sometimes, it remained focused on daily tasks or activities, the meetings and the desk-based work, what I had contributed to in terms of authentic participation or research progression. Other times, it appeared a lot more sensorial and embodied, accounting for the discomforts (physical, emotional, interactional), or intuitive, allowing for connections and insights in trends and occurrences (Coffey, 1999).

Diarying produced a breadth and wealth of data that I had not envisaged and that I was not sure how to utilise for the purpose of the thesis write-up. Poetic, emotional, sensorial or embodied data are often not given prominence in social science empirical studies, and I felt data overwhelm during the data processing (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). I dealt with this by continuing to write about the experiences of meaning-making, and what the analysis process brought up in terms of revisiting and reliving fieldwork experiences, or the insights that occurred as I was reminiscing relations and situations. The ongoing diarying led me to 'continue' the reflexive endeavour post-fieldwork, in line with the ethical continuum introduced in Figure 5 (p. 137).

8.2.2 Examining CPAR enactment throughout the research[86]

In Chapter 4, I introduced the philosophical and analytical prisms (see notably sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.2) that underpin the entire research stance. In this section, I propose to develop some critical *a posteriori* insights into the specificities of CPAR and their impact on the research at hand.

---

[86] Excerpts from this section are drawn from *Critical Participatory Action-Research: Embarking on an unpredictable journey* (Westerveld, 2019).

I start with the authentic participation introduced in section 4.1.2.2. As described in Chapter 4, authentic participation involves a symmetric relationship between the research partners, full participation throughout the design and enactment of social research, and 'systematic restitution' (Fals Borda, 1999, p. 15). Examining authentic participation in retrospect hints at the spaces, interlocutors and instances in which it was actually enacted.

During the organisational immersion with both PUK and PN, the initial months were dedicated to 'being', 'interacting', 'learning' and 'sharing' with the participants. This stance, in line with CPAR, reflects the participatory and co-learning dynamics between researcher and participants, where academic/practitioner boundaries are dismantled, binary roles are challenged, and criticality/reflexivity are reciprocal, in order to support horizontal and empowering research processes. Thus, the fieldwork was dedicated to authentic participation and diarying, attending meetings, informal conversations, field trips and supporting organisational development.

In the first months with PUK, I worked in the office and interacted very closely with the team whilst participating actively in team meetings, conversations, informal times. The participant observation and authentic participation were concentrated around office routine (Ybema *et al.*, 2009) – studying daily struggles, interactions and communications. In PUK, symmetric relationships grew steadily with the staff, mostly through informal meet-ups with individuals. Throughout these meetings, my role was often to act as a reflexive and supportive listener, probing, questioning, suggesting and pointing out opportunities for further action or reflection. With staff members, I was an ear to share concerns or criticism, frustrations and personal questions about roles and professional future. Most participation in the research design and enactment was done by the director who had their own expectations and agenda around the research and the role it might play in shaping a narrative for organisational growth.

Restitution was intermittent rather than systematic, although I did pay attention to adapting the findings in ways that felt most relevant to the staff and board members. With staff, weekly team meetings and two presentations were the main platforms for discussing the

research progress and preliminary findings, involving also other research-related points such as updates on the write-up and the logistical organisation of the trip to Nepal for example. With the BoT, the director provided research updates as part of the quarterly board meetings, and I had the opportunity to briefly introduce my research at the first BoT meeting I attended. The most significant restitution time was at the last BoT meeting I was invited to after the fieldwork in Nepal, where I was given a three-hour slot to present the research, discuss preliminary findings, and organise group work on key issues (see Chapter 7).

Working with PN introduced me to another organisational routine, with 200+ staff across a wide range of projects in remote regions, and funds stemming from 27 partners at the time of the fieldwork. For purely logistical reasons, I 'travelled' around the office according to desktop space made available when project staff went on field trips. This led me to work in six different spaces throughout the PN office, allowing for relations to bud with staff, which made interview recruitment more dynamic. Hot desking also created opportunities to attend meetings and informal discussions which did not come to the management meeting. Whilst working with a senior manager, DP challenges and issues which had not yet been revealed throughout the course of the research came to the forefront and informed many new threads on multifaceted power asymmetries. This meant that in PN, authentic participation was in some ways more organic, with the management meetings and the research training offering regular settings to interact and discuss research progress.

As discussed in Chapter 7, PN's BoT is less involved in daily operations, so interactions were contained to two specific occasions: the PN bi-annual conference and a field trip. Participation in the design and enactment of the research was mostly *ad hoc*, with two key participants playing preponderant roles in highlighting new directions for the research, and one participant facilitating meetings with external development stakeholders. Informal restitution occurred during the management meetings I attended, and formal restitution during the bi-annual conference, with a prepared presentation in English that was translated by a colleague in Nepali. Language played a constraining role in the relations with some participants and understanding of informal discussions; I relied heavily on key individuals who could translate or facilitate conversations in English.

Authentic participation was confined to some specific interactions, relations and moments of the research, and relied heavily on key participants who could facilitate its conditions.

This methodological finding illustrated the extent to which methodological pluralism and flexibility in CPAR are an intrinsic part of the research unfolding. Authentic participation was a result of growing and evolving relations, of my positionality and my personal stance becoming better accustomed to the settings and situations I was in, and to the trust developed with the participants.

8.2.2.2   Participation

The day the 3-year PhD project started, I received an email informing me that the director of PUK, a key instigator of the research, was leaving their role, and that an interim director would be appointed. I found this experience rather destabilising, as when I started meeting with the interim director, their own understanding of the research purpose and scope was inherited and clearly not their priority during the busy induction months. The interim director was more junior than the previous one, and focused on resolving the board division, with strong and urgent agendas to solve (the sustainability of the organisation as one of the critical priorities). They also had less of an experiential and embodied perspective on power issues within the SDP than the previous director.

If the board division and tensions that had arisen and evolved over a number of years (see Chapters 6 and 7) had weighed heavily on the previous director (and in some respect, had motivated their departure), for the interim director, these needed to be rectified through pragmatic actions to increase the efficiency of the board and the organisation as a whole. Different perspectives on these tensions were attributed to the previous director being 'too emotionally involved' in the outcome of the organisation and the relations between board members, which led them to 'making decisions based on emotion, and (…) making decisions not to cause conflict' (quote from the previous director); whereas the interim director sought to make decisions based 'on professional logic, or what is best for the organisation…' (interim director quote).

The leadership change had two important effects on this research: firstly, a central challenge lay with the fact that during the first months of the interim director's appointment, their focus was on being retained past the trial period, which meant that power was not an

attractive or 'on-the-agenda' issue. Secondly, at the beginning of the research especially, there was little emphasis on participatory or critical approaches as they sought to make sense of their new role, the relations and allegiances, and leading a team they had been a member of prior to their appointment at leadership level. However, this simultaneously constituted an opportunity for me to broach topics that were not yet clearly apparent to the interim director in their new role. To resolve these shortcomings, I made a case for meeting them regularly during the first year of the project (prior to the fieldwork) in an attempt to develop, nurture and foster relations that would be critical during the fieldwork.

The preponderant role of PUK's director in shaping the direction of the research from PUK's perspective informs two limitations of authentic participation in this context: firstly, PUK's director held a central position within the organisation, and acted as the voice of the organisation, having developed a strong communicational narrative to advocate for the work done and the vision and mission. I was mainly dependent on them to facilitate the spaces and interactions where the research could be restituted, and the methods carried out; they also played a central role in interview recruitment throughout staff and trustees. Board involvement in the research was limited, which I attribute mainly to the board division and the ongoing tensions (see the findings chapters). Indeed, the research shaped around 'power' and 'privilege' did not seem a direct concern or priority to some influential members who expressed, throughout informal meetings and interviews, a focus towards organisational growth and expansion.

8.2.2.3   Positionality and reflexivity

Working on issues of power and privilege produces tensions at multiple levels. Participants often sought to see their experiences legitimated or validated by my presence and through the research. This experience was clearly apparent during trustee interviews. As an 'insider sufficiently outsider', I was put on the spot by participants asking me to take position about the board division or the partnership expansion agenda: 'What would you have done?', 'What do you think?', 'Don't you agree with me?', 'Do you understand?'. There was a tentative co-optation of loyalties to one or the other side of the debate which I also

experienced *in persona* during a BoT meeting. With eight trustees present (physically) at the meeting, my presence as an observer became strategised as possibly enabling majority to be won on certain difficult questions.

Another tension for ethical research practice arose when interviewing PN donors: I was considered an insider holding prime information about the inner workings of the PN. During one interview, a participant sought to gain privileged insight on an ongoing issue: I was not only a professional and researcher working on the question, but also an 'outsider sufficiently insider' that I was safe to air grievances with. The way I found to deal with this *in situ* (and in the spirit of CPAR) was to reframe it as an opportunity to interrogate the relationship that they had with PN, asking 'What have you done to address this directly with PN?', and using this as a specific anchor point to question development relations in general and DPs specifically. These issues were also discussed with PN directly to better understand the specific issue, and the underlying power relations and issues of the relationship.

The daily life and routine work of both PUK and PN involved principally computer work focused on reporting, project management, donor relations and communication. Enacting authentic participation and diarying were mainly a computer-based operation, which simultaneously meant that I blended in with staff from both organisations, whilst contributing to the image of the academic – this was highlighted by multiple participants who commented on their educational level in comparison to mine, the seriousness of what I was doing, or expecting not to understand what I would write in the form of the thesis.

My positionality shifted and was renegotiated on a daily basis: sometimes, I was invited to 'play' the volunteer, the reviewer, the editor, the observer, the guest, the representative… For myself, as for the partners, it was something of a messy and intriguing affair – who I am, what do I do, why am I here, how do I fit, where/when does it end? And simultaneously, it did allow for respectful and reciprocal relations as these questions were raised repeatedly and my attendance in regular meetings brought some transparency on my work.

CPAR positionality is constituted of roles which are not linear, static, ascribed or limited (context or time-bound); rather, they are fluid, contested, temporary, shifting and improvised, entwined between the personal and professional experiences of self. There is an ongoing negotiation in 'playing' and 'acting' different roles, that sways between

performative and adaptive. Engaging with criticality and reflexivity supported the ongoing negotiation of my positionality within each organisation throughout the research.

In relation to reflexivity, in those instances of the research enactment where I found myself shrunken by professional, academic or personal challenges, diarying and reflexive introspection (Finlay, 2002) felt like they reinstated notions of spaciousness of self. Fragmented identities were often rigidly attributed and imposed on me (academic, westerner, young woman, all in service or existing only in relation to and through the research) stretched and became more flexible in the processes of meaning-making and critical analysis of the conditions of the research.

Introspection and reflexivity (see Chapter 4) constituted crucial elements to untangle inter-individual tensions that emerged (for me) when roles and identities were blurred with one key participant[87]. Experiencing the overlap between professional, personal, intimate, and the range of emotions, including the sense of dependency, vulnerability, shock, deeply affected me. Other structured reflexivity through social critique (see section 4.2.3) was organised with supervisors throughout the course of the research, as well as with PUK and PN representatives during regular check-in meetings to discuss research progress.

Questions around researcher roles, positionality and reflexivity (Coffey, 1999; Finlay and Gough, 2003; Finlay, 2008; Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016) held as much importance as the methodological unfolding of the CPAR – these were never disconnected and permanently informed each other.

---

[87] Following a case of severe salmonella combined with dehydration and reduced kidney function, I was brought to hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal, where I was administered IV medication to which I developed a severe allergic reaction involving anaphylaxis, and required 3 EpiPen's and a 16+ hour adrenaline continuous IV drip to stabilise and counter secondary anaphylaxis. I remained in intensive care for 4 days before being released. The key participant, a UK-trained GP working for PN at the time of the fieldwork, was the first to assess the severity of the salmonella which led them to drive me to hospital where they proceeded to be involved in all the subsequent health protocols, including rehydration and saving my life when the anaphylaxis occurred. Upon hospital release, I stayed with them as they were the trained staff mandated to monitor me in the case of a relapse. I was later diagnosed with resulting PTSD and transfer symptoms which were addressed through EMDR therapy.

8.2.2.4   Ethical concerns in sensitive research

Researching issues relating to power asymmetries in the field of ID in the current context, in a time of social uprising against systemic oppression and calls to end gender inequality and racism in the development sector and beyond, contribute to explaining why and how I mobilised a variety of ethical stances throughout the research and the relations with the participants, the settings and the empirical materials. It was fundamental that I work, represent and interact in as honest and aware a manner as I could. As I explain in the previous section, reflexive diarying enabled me to journey through personal accounts and experiences, some of which were tainted with unconscious racism and white privilege[88].

Throughout the fieldwork, data processing and the write-up, the onus was put on protecting the organisations and the participants involved in the research: that is because discussing issues of power, domination and oppression are fraught with ethical issues (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong, 2008). I came to realise the sensitive nature of the research as I observed, interviewed and analysed the empirical materials, and the level of complexity and responsibility that laid in (re)presenting and meaning-making. It was and is essential that I brought all the necessary attention and caution so that the accounts shared by the participants – as well as the situations experienced throughout the fieldwork – retain an illustrative purpose, rather than an exposing one which could jeopardise the security of the participants.

---

[88] I wish to name a few other spaces where these were addressed, challenged and mirrored back, and that provided invaluable support in making this thesis more consistent with the philosophical and ethical assumptions that underpin the research: the *Decolonial Reading Group* set up across University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University; the online course *Empowering methodologies in organisational research* proposed by The Open University; the *Unlearning Racism* course provided by the Racial Justice Network; the *Modernity + Coloniality* online seminar; *The Healing Solidarity Collective*, an intersectional feminist space to collectively resource and heal people working in solidarity.; the 'Women in Dev Presents' global series online webinars; and the French podcasts *La Poudre* and *Les couilles sur la table.*

8.2.3 Insights on CPAR applied to organisational and development research[89]

CPAR yielded very large volumes of nuanced, detailed and personal primary qualitative data. Interviews and diarying produced the bulk of the data. In order to avoid the commonly experienced feeling of data overwhelm or overload in qualitative research (Coffey, 1999; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016), I had to cautiously plan the ways in which I dealt with the data. I decided to dedicate the fieldwork to the data production, whilst annotating thematic issues and trends that emerged from the experiences, accounts and interactions on a daily basis. Once the fieldwork finished, I focused on data sorting, systematising, transcribing, coding and analysing.

To reflect the empirical material's multiplicity, I decided to engage with the data in different ways in an attempt to complexify the analysis and the interpretation of data (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). For the interviews, reconnecting with the recording (sound) once the transcript (text) had been divided (excerpts) brought back a sense of relational flow (How are interviewee and interviewer interacting? Laughter? Hushed voices? Emotional? What are the surrounding sounds?). It reminded me of the empirical material emergence/production process, sometimes bringing back flash insights, connecting accounts that had been disconnected through the coding process. During the write-up, I re-listened to recordings whilst choosing participant citations, so that the systematic and normative coding process could cohabit with the sensorial meaning-making process (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016).

Processing the diary entries was a rewarding academic experience as the breadth and wealth of empirical evidence and introspection that I had logged allowed for 'triangulaxivity', 'the use of multiple techniques and a commitment to self-inspection for gathering and/or handling researcher's own thoughts and activities, within a single study' (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016, p. 37). Analysing the diary entries combined with the interview transcripts and markings brought new concepts, issues and analytical opportunities to light. Koro-Ljungberg also considers triangulaxivity as 'a methodological approach that contributes to the validity

---

of personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological and ontological influences when multiple methods, sources, theories, and/or investigators are employed during research and data analysis processes' (p. 38). This proved the case during my write-up, as fieldwork reflections and insights, came to bolster the interview quotes or the vignettes.

Overall, neither data production nor analysis were a linear, causal and straight-forward endeavour. CPAR does not cater for clean, aseptic, predictable, comfortable, definite, or disentangled research processes. It is not suitable for management-based tools and calendars, funders' reporting, annual budgeting, etc.; it is by its very nature a messy approach (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003; Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Torre *et al.*, 2012; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016), with subjective shades and experiences of messiness. Aligned with the ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007) of CPAR, I argue that messiness is a praxis. It goes hand in hand with complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, unpredictability, all of which can generate discomfort. And that discomfort was an intrinsic part of the approach, addressed with bespoke methods and a strong axiological stance.

In this section, I have reviewed the enactment the CPAR approach in critical management and development studies, and have pointed to some valuable learnings that have emerged from the study in relation to researcher self and positionality, data management, data processing and flowing through the entangled analytical processes. In particular, I have shared how the relations that are developed with the empirical materials during the data processing shape not only the findings, but also the ways in which these will be considered valid and robust. In the following section, I lay out the implications of the research in terms of limitations, learnings and avenues for future research resulting from this study.

8.3 Implications of the research: Contributions and avenues for further research

8.3.1 Main contributions of the research

This research provides three different forms of original contributions to knowledge: conceptual and theoretical; methodological and ethical; and policy and practice contributions.

I start here with the conceptual and theoretical contributions this thesis makes to a variety of bodies of knowledge. Firstly, this study has added to existing literature on **partnerships in international development**. More specifically, the concept of partnership has been explored critically from the perspective and through the experiences of Southern development stakeholders. This has been rarely done in empirical studies and has failed to represent the ways in which Southern CSOs are subjected to global development frameworks and agendas (the MDGs, the SDGs and the High-Level Meetings on Aid Effectiveness) in the ways they experience or conceptualise DPs.

When questioned about the semantic use of the terms 'partner' and 'donor', the influence of global agendas appeared to have played decisive roles in articulating the term partner as preferred and more acceptable within the sector. These agendas have conveyed and instilled a sector-wide aspiration 'to be a partner', as the term carries a positive connotation in vogue with current development trends and debates (see Chapter 2). The use of the term *partner* has therefore been strategised by PN, as they use the term in written outputs to align with the development frameworks that are currently in place, even when the term does not align with partnerial expectations (value-oriented relations). In the act of naming, political strategies are at play, as Southern partners are concerned with satisfying the expectations of Northern stakeholders. To remedy the loss in meaning, Southern partners have devised strategies to allow for alternative conceptualisations of the term partner to emerge: an example was the functional vs strong/better partnership, which echoes other dichotomised conceptualisations of partnership (found in the works of Northern scholars

such as Brinkerhoff, 2002; Slater and Bell, 2002; Crawford, 2003; Tomlinson, 2005; Schaaf, 2015)

Thus, considering *partnerships as a possible 'discursive trick'* (as proposed by Dar and Cooke, 2008, p. 5 in relation to the term 'organisation'), provides a new critical insight into the political nature and discursive effects of partnerships as the sole mode of collaborating in ID. In considering the onus put on partnerships as produced and resulting from global development agendas and frameworks, and in recognising the influence these global texts have come to bear on development trends, priorities and funding, DPs can be conceptualised as a discursive trick that homogenises the sector and frames them as the only acceptable social arrangements. In doing so, a critical examination of DPs is rendered impossible, as no other social arrangements exist. This means that Southern CSOs don't have any other choice than to be in partnership if they operate within the development sector – even if the conditions of DPs are unsatisfactory, unequal or unsustainable. This finding contributes to critical development and management studies, insofar that it casts a spotlight on the limited debates around partnerships, and how existing literature systematically fails to challenge DPs and examine other ways to collaborate in the development sector and beyond.

Two other key conceptual contributions emerged from this analysis. The heuristic device developed for the research, entitled *the imaginaries of symbiosis*, offers a novel prism through which to explore partnerial relations considered *de facto* as good and equal. Throughout the thesis, the imaginaries of symbiosis were simultaneously drawn upon as an analytical method to examine partnerships – notably through the underpinning beliefs, narratives and assumptions – but also as a conceptual framework used to symbolise an idealised perception of DPs as terrains for mutual goals and expectations. Attempts to challenge these imaginaries were seen as hampering the symbiosis, meaning that conflict, disagreement or other partnerial issues were seldom addressed. The ruptures to these imaginaries include the unexplored areas of dissidence, strategical negotiation or political manoeuvring that go against the uniform ideal of togetherness. The imaginaries of symbiosis contribute to debates in critical development, critical organisational and critical management studies, by providing new areas of partnership analysis that go beyond dimensional power analyses which examine only notions of 'power over', by illustrating the

nature of partnership identity co-creation, and by highlighting how narratives can be strategised by development actors.

Another contribution made by the study to the existing knowledge on partnerships lies with the *relational spectrum* developed to represent different ways in which DPs are enacted, and the various onuses put on partnership by different stakeholders. The conceptualisation of unifying, differentiating and contrasting narratives highlighted the ways in which diverging interests or perspectives compete, co-exist and complement to determine the quality of and the value alignment in DPs. The spectrum was conceptualised throughout this study as a heuristic device to analyse relations and practices, rather than formulate organisational status. It can be drawn upon (and expanded collaboratively with development stakeholders) to better understand existing relations and practices that operate in DPs. It advances existing literature on what constitutes an equitable partnership, by including Southern perspectives in the definition and analysis of development interactions.

This research has also contributed key insights into **the analysis of power** by highlighting opportunities in endorsing *theoretical and conceptual pluralism* in critical development and critical organisational studies. Combining different theoretical and conceptual frameworks – namely, the imaginaries of symbiosis, Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy, Gaventa's power cube, Foucault's (combined with Lilja and Vinthagen's work) power-resistance, and postcolonial theories – has shown the extent to which power asymmetries are produced throughout every development interaction, relation and practice, and more widely, are constitutive of the sector. In bringing together different frameworks and theories to examine power asymmetries in DPs, this study provides a comprehensive empirical analysis of previously unconnected or unaccounted for issues of power in DP relations and practices. In this respect, the research makes apparent the critical scope for connecting different theoretical frameworks to analyse power, where the empirical literature reviewed throughout the thesis has focused on applying one specific power framework only.

One pivotal contribution of this thesis is the notion of resistance and 'strategisation' by Southern CSOs – these issues have not been analysed as such in empirical studies before.

Through the examples provided by PN, strategies and resistances appeared to offer pathways for Southern partners to challenge, alleviate and redress the effects and experiences of power asymmetries. The idea behind bridging Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube and Lilja and Vinthagen's (2014) frameworks on power stemmed from working initially on Gaventa's notion of spaces (see Figure 4, p. 95) that brought to my attention the different claimed and created spaces in which PN were developing key activities, such as the trainings, the management meetings and others. Upon analysing these spaces and activities, I came to realise that the notion of space ought to be analysed in conjunction with the activities taking place therein, and how the nature of these activities could enhance the understanding of different forms of power. Foucault's power-resistance connection, and the works carried out by Lilja and Vinthagen on analysing types of resistance in relation to forms of power, emerged as relevant frameworks to add to Gaventa's power cube. In combining these three analytical prisms, the study provides a novel awareness of the plurality of spaces and connections where power-resistance are produced in DPs, and points to the different ways in which resistances play out in DP relations.

In opening up the empirical study to a wide range of development stakeholders, the thesis proposes a *wide-scoped power analysis of DPs*, and thereby goes beyond the commonly examined binary donors/CSOs interface – which most of the empirical literature reviewed throughout the thesis fails to do. The donor/CSO binary endorses a 'power over' dimensional approach, where power can only be conceptualised and imagined between the 'powerful' and the 'powerless'. By including other protagonists, relations, practices and interactions, the research outlined the extent to which power asymmetries are produced across and throughout a multiplicity of social arrangements. Focusing on the diverseness of experiences of power relations in DPs, different forms of power were approached in a connected and inter-related manner. In bringing to light the impacts of power asymmetries on Southern partners, the study contributes to critical development studies insofar that 'power over' was only one facet of the forms of power identified. This contribution carries profound implications, as it complexifies the ways in which power is commonly conceptualised and examined in development studies, and highlights the 'transversality of struggles' experienced by Southern CSOs.

Finally, in drawing upon Foucault's notion of *power as productive and positive*, this thesis has highlighted the extent to which Southern CSOs actively produce and strategise resistances to mitigate power asymmetries in DPs. Thereby, the representation of Southern CSOs and peoples as inferior, passive and helpless, as portrayed in the colonial discourse, was challenged and debunked overtly and covertly in many relations these CSOs engage in with other development stakeholders. These resistances allowed for Southern CSOs to reclaim agency and choice (to some extent) in their organisational and managerial strategisation.

This leads to the third form of theoretical contributions made by this study: to **postcolonial studies**. Baaz's (2005) extensive postcolonial analysis of development relations looked at the pervasiveness of the colonial discourse and the *formation of identities in development*. Her book provided a fundamental inspiration for section 6.2.2. This study expands her work as it explored new features of power asymmetries in development relations, notably: the external attribution of competing identities that can either be conflating or absorbing (when PN is either considered a beneficiary or a donor); essentialisation as an organisational strategy in the development of PUK's partnership expansion narrative; and the sliding scale of 'otherness' of PN's staff who are simultaneously seen as requiring help and possible key players in the expansion strategy.

The *politics of ownership* also emerged as a key finding of the research, and constituted a pivotal contribution to critical development studies and postcolonial studies. Development ownership (standing for the credit taken for the impact of development interventions) was a recurring point of tension throughout the DPs that were examined, mainly because of competing interests in the outcomes and impact of development interventions. Ownership was politically drawn upon and instrumentalised by donors to increase visibility and reputation – using different means such as competition, omission, misrepresentation and erasure. The multiplicity of examples provided in the empirical study points to ownership as being a key feature of power production in DPs and Northern CSOs, which in turn result in rendering invisible the work and realities of Southern CSOs.

The notion of resistance is also key to postcolonial studies (Fanon, 1961; Spivak, 1983; Mohanty, 1984; Bhabha, 1994; Kapoor, 2008). However, it is oftentimes conceptualised in

the relations between the Westerner and the Other, with resistances portrayed as reactive (to oppression, slavery, capitalism, acculturation, religion, colonialism, etc.). This study provides a new lens into a postcolonial analysis of resistances as constitutive of development relations.

This postcolonial analysis of power issues as constitutive of DPs undoubtedly enrichens the academic debates on epistemic domination and the normalisation/circulation of hegemonic concepts that entrench power asymmetries; and it provides new insights into the examination of DP practices and relations as producing domination, exclusion and fixed identities.

I follow with the **methodological and ethical contributions** of the study, and more broadly, the ways in which this thesis advances *the field of ethnographic studies*. In designing and developing the CPAR methodology for this research, the paucity of literature on CPAR (and more specifically, in the field of development, management or organisational studies) became apparent, which meant that all aspects of this project's methodological unfolding were experienced iteratively and *in situ*, with no empirical materials I could draw from to make sense of the unfolding[90]. To remedy this, the thesis portrays exhaustive accounts of the processes, learnings and insights relating to the methodological emergence and enactment, and explicitly details a variety of experiences that unfolded throughout the course of the fieldwork and beyond.

This study clearly outlines the commitment to methodological pluralism and *the development of tailored mixed-methods*, and in doing so, it provides tangible insights into the opportunities, challenges and personal dilemmas that were experienced in utilising methods such as OTR or journaling. Such candid and authentic accounts are not commonly found in ethnography (although some can be encountered in strands of critical ethnography that reflexively depict personal journeys), and this is the first study of the genre that shares in relation to CPAR research. For this reason, section 8.2 constitutes a fundamental

---

[90] I acknowledge that this consideration is applicable to most forms of grounded qualitative research, and that ethnographic studies are often composed of novel aspects in methodological unfolding. However, while I found significant reflexive recounting among critical ethnographies, this was not the case for CPAR, and I had to adapt, adjust and amend (what) sometimes (felt like) blindly.

contribution to ethnographic approaches and to the analysis of non-conventional methodologies in social sciences and qualitative research.

Another pivotal contribution of this work is the development of *the ethical continuum* that combines several forms of ethical perspectives and brings them together as part of the philosophical underpinnings, the relational dynamic with the participants and the settings, reflexivity and self-care, and the relation to the empirical materials. Social science ethical guidelines are oftentimes drawn upon as rigid and institutional frameworks that need to be navigated and negotiated in order to obtain approval from committees removed from the actual research. In positioning the researcher as a key protagonist of the ethical continuum, this study endorses a stance where ethical guidelines become an intrinsic and ongoing part of the unfolding of the research. In removing a sense of externalised endorsement and instigating ethics as part of the philosophical and methodological process, the ethical continuum constitutes a decisive contribution to grounded and reflexive research.

The last form of original contribution this thesis provides stems from **the practical avenues and recommendations** that derive from the empirical study – these can be adapted for organisational or policy-oriented change. These practical insights into strategies and actions taken by Northern and Southern development stakeholders have been rarely described in empirical studies. Oftentimes, check lists or key actions are outlined as part of quick-fix remedies to solve DP issues. However, this research suggests that a broad and multi-faceted commitment to tackling and mitigating power asymmetries in DPs is necessary, and pointed to the plurality of spaces and connections where power-resistance is produced in DPs. In providing a detailed empirical account of resistances produced in different realms and spaces, and by different development protagonists, the research contributes to critical development studies as it outlines the opportunity in examining resistances as a key facet of DP relations and practices.

8.3.2   Avenues for further research

By examining power asymmetries in the context of DPs, this research has sought to contribute to the current debates on power issues within the ID sector, the role of narratives in shaping partnerial practices and relations, the resistances developed by Southern partners to address power imbalances and violence, and the opportunities of CPAR and interpretive thematic analysis to shed light on power, privilege and ongoing neo-colonial relations in the ID sector. Throughout the course of the project, further opportunities and avenues for research arose that I wish to discuss here.

Firstly, the rapidly changing political and democratic context in Nepal is expected to bring around changes in the current governance system which could have the potential to critically influence the ways in which Southern partners will intervene in remote communities. With the ongoing federalisation process, new development protagonists are emerging. National efforts and increased funding in infrastructures and roads were pointed out by participants as a crucial step towards bringing new regions on the 'development map', and rendering accessible very remote communities. Local management of public funds brought PN participants to hope for more sustainability, with gaupalinkas possibly continuing project implementation beyond donors' funding. Exploring how new development protagonists at local level play enabling or constraining roles in project implementation and sustainability, and in the relations that PN develops with the communities; and if/how they modify the ways in which previously established Northern development stakeholders hold the monopoly on the design and implementation of development interventions locally would constitute an interesting avenue to further the findings of this study.

Secondly, whilst carrying out the analysis of power issues in DPs, I intentionally chose a pluralist approach by combining different thematic lenses, heuristic devices and frameworks to represent their complexity and multidimensionality. The theoretical underpinnings for this exercise were located in critical development, management and organisational studies. Although I have resisted eulogising PN's relations and practices in contrast with those of Northern stakeholders, focusing on the experiences and intersubjective accounts of power such as friction loss, competition and threats etc., could suggest 'infatuation with the 'local'

or indigenous' (Baaz, 2005, p. 21), removing PN from the global production of power asymmetries and identities. This constitutes in part the criticism articulated against post-developmental theorists, who glorify the local as intrinsically righteous and above the exercise of power (Kiely, 1999; Escobar, 2005). Including different types of development identities (multiple types of donors and partners), I sought to counter the cleaving tendency which opposes donors to partners, and rather, accentuate the ways in which these identities are co-constructed and co-negotiated.

Embracing a 'fully' postcolonial perspective on power issues in DPs could allow for further research to reveal deeper systemic issues in order to examine development, donor and partnership identities as co-constructed and intrinsically part of the development discourse (Baaz, 2005). Such an analysis would highlight the ways in which identities are dynamic, negotiated, incoherent and multiple, where 'unprivileged power positions do not imply a position outside the workings of discourse and power' (Baaz, 2005, p. 21). A post-development stance would echo participants' comments on the need not only to restructure the development system, but to challenge the system as the only viable one, that requires amending and saving, as reported in this quote:

> The layers of hierarchies in development is [sic] insane, and we are replicating the very systems that lots of people that are going into development are trying to tear down. [...] What is happening is that we are wasting the money that should be going into projects for people who don't have access to basic human rights. It's absurd that we have a model that looks like this, and I just think: why can we not just trust small community-based organisations? (...) I really do believe that the people who know the best about a sole issue are the ones that are being affected by the issues themselves. And so, if we're trying to, let's say, level the playing field in the world, that's where we need to be getting the resources to. (Laura, development stakeholder)

In critically addressing the development model, then the concept of partnership as the only way of working together in development, could also be critically reassessed. The label 'partnership' has become static and has come to constrain the negotiation of the terms of the collaboration. In practice, this means that when partnerial relations have become

dissatisfactory, they are not questioned or negotiated, in part because the label is so pervasive that it does not come with a prior discussion of what both parties expect from the relationship.

In order to match current trends and receive funding, development stakeholders are dependent on 'being in partnership', leading to the diminishing of the political and ethical meaning of partnership. Critically examining what constitutes 'being in partnership' for all organisations involved in DPs is a crucial step to identify where improvement can be made towards greater equality in DPs. In particular, the evolving motivations, expectations, aspirations and contributions that each organisation can provide to the partner. In this sense, partnerships could be critically examined as by-products of neoliberal practices that force Southern organisations in relations and practices that they would not choose for themselves had they the choice. If Southern organisations did in effect hold the choice, would they be able to define the terms of partnership engagement, weigh in critically to denounce problematic relations and practices, and disengage from those partnerships that they did not see fit to pursue?

With rising debates around the need to decolonise development, to recognise the pervasiveness of colonial legacies in the shaping of development interventions, to address the flawed relations and practices in DPs, and the intrinsic racism permeating the sector, there is a crucial need to foster emboldened debates and conversations with governance, managerial and operational NGO stakeholders.

Effectiveness Frameworks in International Development Co-Operation
From 'Aid Effectiveness' to 'Development Effectiveness'

2000-2015
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
'Reduce extreme poverty'

2016-2030
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
'No one left behind'

Aid Effectiveness

New models of cooperation through the involvement of new actors and partnerships: South–South, triangular, philanthropic and private-sector

Development Effectiveness

1972
Rio Conference – World Summit Report on sustainable development

2015
Paris Agreement on climate change

2002
Rome Declaration [First High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness]

2004
Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results

2005
Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness [Second High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness]

2008
Accra Agenda for Action [Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness] ★

2011
Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation ★

2014
First High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation Mexico City

2016
Second High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation Nairobi

2019
Senior-Level Meeting to reaffirm the crucial role of effectiveness for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs New York

2002
First International Conference on Financing for Development Monterrey, Mexico

2008
Second International Conference on Financing for Development Doha

2015
Addis Ababa Action Agenda Third International Conference on Financing for Development

Partnerships become a 'principle' of international development and are expected to be assessed

2010 ★
Bogotá Statement

2010 ★
Istanbul principles

2010 ★
Dili Declaration

Service delivery remains the ongoing model
Inclusion of private sector

Development Frameworks

Overarching International Development Frameworks/Agenda

→ Linear modular evolution

Breaking point

International Effectiveness Frameworks

Regional Effectiveness Frameworks

International Financing Frameworks

International Climate Frameworks

★ Inclusion of CSOs to the negotiation

APPENDIX II – CODING OUTLINE

NVivo Codes for CPAR analysis (last update 27/02/2020)

1. Participant information
Journey to P
Code content relating to their experiences prior to entrance into the organisation/DP
Code any ID experience (i.e. having volunteered/worked/trusteed, experience in other contexts…)
Role within the organisation
Code content on the role, responsibilities, tasks within the organisation/DP

2. Attitudes
Positive attitude
Code explicit or implicit content that refers to positive references – might be organisational, activity, context, personal, political, etc. Any beliefs, points of views, expression of content
Negative attitude
Code explicit or implicit content that refers to negative references – might be organisational, activity, context, personal, political, etc. Any beliefs, points of views, critic, emotional expression of discontent

3. Development
Agenda/discourses | cross-code with + or - attitudes
Code text that outlines global development agendas, discourses, initiatives, texts
Code work carried out by DPs & DO embedded within these, & impact of these on organisational activities & strategies, the impact thereof on DP relations, practices (i.e. SDG, MDG)
Include discussions of these agendas/discourses, even when they might not be explicitly referred to but have marked a discontinuity in practices or strategies
Practices | cross-code with + or - attitudes
Code content that describes development practices
Include how people justify of strategies, practices or relations abiding by these models
Code conceptualisation of it as a problem or an opportunity

4. Power
Practices | cross-code with + or - attitudes
Code content outlining practices imbued with power, explicit or implicit references to how practices might display issues of power, either productive or problematic
Relations | cross-code with + or – attitudes
Code content outlining relations imbued with power, explicit or implicit references to how practices might display issues of power, either productive or problematic with sector, funders, partners etc

5. Partnerships

DP Descriptions

Code content that suggests or specifically addresses what is/should be/could be a DP

DP protagonists |when DPs included cross-code with 'DP relations'

Code content referring to any development actors: donors, international institutions, corporations

DPs relations |when development organisations included cross-code with 'protagonists'

Code text that references any type of development relationship (i.e. contractual agreements, collaborations, partnerships, etc) with any protagonist, whatever level, context, role (i.e. donors, NNGO, SNGO, INGO, CSO, GRO, gov, government bodies, businesses etc) for any duration

Code comments on, analyses or critiques the actions/behaviour/practices of a DP or DO negatively

How could be improved

Code comments about what could be done to improve DPs

SDP Extrapartnership

Code content referring to relations between SDP & protagonists outside it

SDP Future | cross-code with +/- attitudes

Code content specifically relating to ideas on how the DP will evolve, or actions that need to be taken for its sustainability, or any other views on the continuity/expansion of the DP

SDP Intrapartnership

Code content reflecting any facets of the relations and practices within the DP (among the 3 partners)

6. Organisations

PA Code text that discusses or analyses governance (BoT, WG), HR, practices, strategies

PN Code text that discusses or analyses governance (BoT, WG), HR, practices, strategies

PUK Code text that discusses or analyses governance (BoT, WG), HR, practices, strategies

7. Context

Nepal | when discussion specifically about PN, cross-code PN-Nepal

Include any relevant content that refers to specific contextual insights (i.e. SWC, government, federalisation, gaupalinka, role of local gov…) and relating also to development practices

UK | when discussion specifically about PUK, cross-code PUK-UK

Include any relevant content that refers to specific contextual insights (i.e. DFID, SWIDN, CSO…) and relating also to development practice

8. CPAR

OTR | do not cite in the write-up

Code any content that has been mentioned as OTR by the interviewee

Cross-code with any other relevant code, but exclude quotes from write-up

Reflexivity

Code content relating to researcher process throughout the research (mostly journaling and note taking, but to some extent could include researcher questions during the interviews)

Researcher/participant interactions

Code content stemming from the interviewing process, that suggest or reflect researcher and participant co-learning and co-producing of empirical evidence

APPENDIX III – THEMATIC CODING PROCESS

Example of the thematic coding process with interview excerpts

Screenshot of the NVivo coding on Linda's (PUK) interview transcript

Yeah… A number of WG were set up in the same time, because for a long time PUK didn't have any committees at all, and everything went to the board (BoT) and there was quite a level of detail, I think particularly on the governance stuff around policies and things like that, and fundraising, which meant, you know, just all the time to get through that level of detail in the board. And ▮▮▮▮ the previous chief executive, our director, brought forward a proposal, there were 3: let's see, there was governance, partnerships and OD and fundraising, and recently we set up one on finance. The aim of the partnership and organisational development one is to really to nurture and support our existing partnerships and to make sure that we have strong relationships with the organisational, organisations that we partner with. It also includes doing initial exploration for potential new partnerships, which are key to troll for the next few years (???) is whether there is scope for new partnerships which might enable us to bring in more money, which will strengthen our ability to support PN. It also, to ensure that there is a healthy organisational culture, and that we're engaged with both our supporters and staff and we have a clear set of values, and people are aligned, people feel comfortable about those values and the way we work is aligned to those values. We have got Terms of Reference (ToR) which I can send you. There's also supporting work the organisation does in terms of forward leadership ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
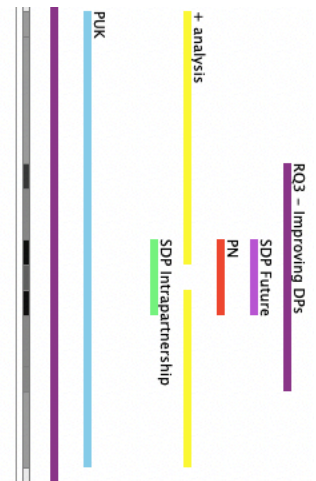
Screenshot of the NVivo coding on Geetu's (PN) interview transcript

I think so, because after this system [change], local level is very powerful. After this federalisation, local level has become very powerful, so if we have good coordination with the local level, if the local level supports us, they want, then we can do so many things. Because in this situation, very young [generation [00:25:30] are in local level, in ward. This meaning, so if the main of the ward level. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
▮▮▮▮, in many area, they're very young, they're very energetic. If we convince them, if they realise that this is the scenario in every local level, they want to become more different than other, they want to make their one ward more developed, more stronger. This is the scenario in this situation. So, I think from this federal system, it will be very helpful for us to do the work, because we can coordinate with them in the local level. You don't need to go to district level every time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adhikari, Jagannath (2008) *Changing Livelihoods. Essays on Nepal's Development since 1990*. Martin Chautari.

Adkins, Lisa, Ahmed, S., Alvesson, M., Skoldberg, K., Beck, U., Giddens, A., Lash, S., Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., Fay, B., Felski, R., Game, A., Gergen, K., Gergen, M., Haraway, Dona, Huysman, K., Kaufmann, L., Lash, S., Latour, B., Probyn, E., Roper, M., Skeggs, B., Woolgar, S. and Ashmore (2011) 'Reflexivity and the Politics of Qualitative Research', in May, Tim (ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. Sage Publications, pp. 333–348.

Aitken, S. C., Cohen, P., Denzin, N. K., Elliot, A., Spezzano, C., Ginzburg, C., Henriques, J., Urwin, C., Venn, C., Hollway, W., Jefferson, T., Hunt, J/, Loncoln, Y. S., Guba, E. G., Pajaczkowska, C., Young, L., Pile, S., Thrift, N., Raphael Reed, L., Rose, Gillian, Sayers, J., Shaw, J., Silverman, D., Strauss, A. L., Corbin, J., Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H. and Melody, J. (2011) 'Subjectivity and Qualitative Methods', in May, Tim (ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. Sage Publications, pp. 180–196.

Al-Amoudi, Ismael (2007) 'Redrawing Foucault's social ontology', *Organization*, 14(4), pp. 543–563.

Alvesson, Mats and Deetz, Stanley (2000) 'The critical tradition: critical theory and postmodernism', in *Doing Critical Management Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 81–111.

Alvesson, Mats and Deetz, Stanley (2011a) 'A framework for critical research', in *Doing Critical Management Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 139–165.

Alvesson, Mats and Deetz, Stanley (2011b) 'Developing Critical Sensitivity in Management Research', in *Doing Critical Management Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 166–191.

Alvesson, Mats and Sandberg, Jörgen (2013a) 'Applying the Problematization Methodology in Practice', in *Constructing Research Questions: Doing Interesting Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 71–91.

Alvesson, Mats and Sandberg, Jörgen (2013b) 'Problematization as a Methodology for Generating Research Questions', in *Constructing Research Questions: Doing Interesting Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 47–70.

Baaz, Maria Eriksson (2005) *The paternalism of partnership: A postcolonial reading of identity in development aid*. Zed Books.

Bachrach, Peter and Baratz, Morton S. (1962) 'Two faces of power', *The American Political Science Review*, 56(4), pp. 947–952.

Banks, Nicola, Hulme, David and Edwards, Michael (2015) 'NGOs, States, and Donors Revisited: Still Too Close for Comfort?', *World Development*. w, 66, pp. 707–718.

Barad, Karen (2007) 'Meeting the Universe Halfway', in *Meeting the Universe Halfway - Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, pp. 1–27.

Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond (2005) 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization*. University of Sheffield Library, 59(1), pp. 39–75.

Baudrillard, Jean (1977) *Forget Foucault*. Semiotexte(e).

Bauman, Z., Beck, U., Beck-Gernsheim, E., Benhabib, S., Burgess, R. G., Chamberlain, M., Thompson, P., Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J., Wengraf, T., Devine, F., Heath, S., Finch, J., Mason, J., Flowerdew, J., Fontana, A., Frey, J. H., Giddens, A., Hollway, W., Jefferson, T., Holstein, J., Gubrium, J., Kvale, S., Miller, R. L., O 'brien, M., Harris, J., Sevenhuijsen, S., Silverman, D., Smart, C., Neale, B. and Solberg, A. (2011) 'Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, Listening and Interpreting', *Qualitative Research in Action*, pp. 226–241.

Bhabha, Homi K. (1994) *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Bhatta, Chandra D. (2016) 'The Interface between the State and Civil Society in Nepal', *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 10, pp. 63–91.

Boje, David M. and Rosile, Grace Ann (2001) 'Where's the Power in Empowerment? Answers from Follett and Clegg', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 37(1), pp. 90–117.

BOND (2020) *COVID-19: A Global Health Crisis*.

Brinkerhoff, Derick W. and Brinkerhoff, Jennifer M. (2004) 'Partnerships between international donors and non-governmental development organizations: opportunities and constraints', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 70(2), pp. 253–270.

Brinkerhoff, Derick W. and Brinkerhoff, Jennifer M. (2011) 'Public-private partnerships: Perspectives on purposes, publicness, and good governance', *Public Administration and Development*, 31(1), pp. 2–14.

Brinkerhoff, Jennifer M. (2002a) 'Government-nonprofit partnership: A defining framework', *Public Administration and Development*, 22(1), pp. 19–30.

Brinkerhoff, Jennifer M. (2002b) *Partnerships for International Development: Rhetoric or Results?* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Brinkmann, Svend (2014) 'Doing Without Data', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), pp. 720–725.

Brydon-Miller, Mary, Greenwood, Davydd and Maguire, Patricia (2003) 'Why action research?', *Action Research Volume*, 1(1), pp. 9–28.

Bryman, Alan (2012) *Social research methods*. 4th Editio. Oxford University Press.

Campfens, Hubert (1996) 'Partnerships in international social development: Evolution in practice and concept', *International Social Work*, 39(2), pp. 201–223.

Cassell, Catherine and Johnson, Phil (2006) 'Action research: Explaining the diversity', *Human Relations*, 59(6), pp. 783–814.

Chahim, Dean and Prakash, Aseem (2014) 'NGOization, Foreign Funding, and the Nicaraguan Civil Society', *Voluntas*, 25(2), pp. 487–513.

Chambers, Robert (2006) *Poverty Unperceived: Traps, Biases and Agenda*.

Charities Aid Foundation (2020) *CAF Charity Coronavirus Briefing*.

Coffey, Amanda (1999) *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldword and the Representation of Identity*. Sage Publications.

Collier, Paul (2007) *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press.

Contu, Alessia and Girei, Emanuela (2014) 'NGOs management and the value of "partnerships" for equality in international development: What's in a name?', *Human Relations*, 67(2), pp. 205–232.

Cooke, Bill and Kothari, Uma (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Zed Books.

Cornwall, Andrea and Eade, Deborah (2010) *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*. Practical Action Publishing.

Cowen, Michael and Shenton, Robert (1995) 'The Invention of Development', in Crush, Jonathan (ed.) *Power of Development*. Routledge, pp. 27–43.

Crawford, Gordon (2003) 'Partnership or power? Deconstructing the "partnership for governance reform" in Indonesia', *Third World Quarterly*, 24(1), pp. 139–159.

Crawford, Gordon and Andreassen, Bård A. (2013) 'Human rights, power and civic action: Theoretical considerations', in *Human Rights, Power and Civic Action: Comparative Analyses of Struggles for Rights in Developing Societies*. Routledge, pp. 1–21.

Cropper, Steve, Huxham, Chris, Ebers, Marc and Smith Ring, Peter (2008) 'Manifestations of Inter-organizational Relations', in *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations*. Oxford Handbooks Online, pp. 1–6.

Crowley, Una (2009) 'Genealogy Method', *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 1, pp. 341–344.

Crush, Jonathan (1995) *Power of Development*. Routledge.

Dagnino, Evelina (2010) 'Citizenship: a perverse confluence', in *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, pp. 101–110.

Dar, Sadhvi and Cooke, Bill (2008) *The New Development Management: Critiquing the dual modernization*. Zed Books.

Dean, Jon (2017) 'Introduction: a rationale for reflexivity', in *Doing Reflexivity: An Introduction*. Policy Press, pp. 1–16.

Development Assistance Committee (2008) 'The Paris declaration on aid effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for action', *OECD*, pp. 1–23.

DFID Nepal (2009) *Nepal Operational Plan: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Annex*.

DFID Nepal (2014) *Operational Plan 2011-2016 DFID Nepal*.

Dickson-Swift, Virginia, James, Erica Lyn and Liamputtong, Pranee (2008) *Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Sciences: Managing boundaries, emotions and risk*. Cambridge University Press.

Digeser, Peter (1992) 'The Fourth Face of Power', *The Journal of Politics*, 54(4), pp. 977–1007.

Dorlin, Elsa (2009) *Sexe, Race, Classe, pour une épistémologie de la domination*. PUF.

Edwards, Michael and Hulme, David (1996) 'Too close for comfort? The impact of official aid on nongovernmental organizations', *World Development*, 24(6), pp. 961–973.

Edwards, Rosalind and Holland, Janet (2013) *What is Qualitative Interviewing?*, *'What is?' Research Methods Series*. Bloomsbury.

Elbers, Willem and Schulpen, Lau (2011) 'Decision making in partnerships for development: Explaining the influence of local partners', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 40(5), pp. 795–812.

Elbers, Willem and Schulpen, Lau (2013) 'Corridors of Power: The Institutional Design of North-South NGO Partnerships', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 24(1), pp. 48–67.

Escobar, Arturo (1995) *Encountering Development: The making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press.

Escobar, Arturo (2005) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Second Edi. Princeton University Press.

Esteva, Gustavo (2010) 'Development', in Sachs, Wolfgang (ed.) *The Development Dictionary*. Zeb Books, pp. 1–23.

Evans, Rosalind (2012) 'Towards a creative synthesis of participant observation and participatory research: Reflections on doing research with and on young Bhutanese refugees in Nepal', *Childhood*, 20(2), pp. 169–184.

Eyben, Rosalind and Savage, Laura (2013) 'Emerging and Submerging Powers: Imagined

Geographies in the New Development Partnership at the Busan Fourth High Level Forum', *Journal of Development Studies*, 49(4), pp. 457–469.

Fals Borda, Orlando (1996) 'Power Knowledge and Emancipation', *Systems Practice*, 9(2), pp. 177–181.

Fals Borda, Orlando (1999) *The Origins and Challenges of Participatory Action Research*.

Fals Borda, Orlando (2013) 'Action Research in the Convergence of Disciplines', *International Journal of Action Research*, 9(2), pp. 155–167.

Fanon, Frantz (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press New York.

Fawcett, Barbara and Hearn, Jeff (2004) 'Researching others: Epistemology, experience, standpoints and participation', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory and Practice*, 7(3), pp. 201–218.

Fine, Michelle (2016) 'Participatory Designs for Critical Literacies From Under the Covers', *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, 65(1), pp. 47–68.

Finlay, Linda (2002) 'Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice', *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), pp. 209–230.

Finlay, Linda (2008) 'Reflecting on "Reflective practice"', *Practice-Based Professional Learning Centre, The Open University*, pp. 1–27.

Finlay, Linda and Gough, Brendan (2003) *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*. Blackwell Science.

Flick, Uwe (2011) 'Ethics in Qualitative Research', in *Designing Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 68–76.

Foley, Douglas E. (2002) 'Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(4), pp. 469–490.

Foucault, Michel (1971) 'Orders of Discoures: Inaugural lecture delivered at the College de France', *Social Science Information*, 10(2), pp. 7–30.

Foucault, Michel (1978) *The History of Sexuality - Volume I: An Introduction*. Pantheon Books New York.

Foucault, Michel (1979) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books Edition.

Foucault, Michel (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Longman.

Foucault, Michel (1982) 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), pp. 777–795.

Foucault, Michel (2000) *Power (The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 3)*. Edited by James D. Faubion. New York: New Press.

Freire, Paulo (1992) *Pedagogia da Esperança: Um Reencontro com a Pedagogia do Oprimido*. Paz e Terra.

Freire, Paulo (1996) *Pédagogie de l'autonomie*. Edited by Éditions Érès.

Freire, Paulo (1998) *Pedagogy of Freedom - Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Freire, Paulo (2005a) *Pedagogia do Oprimido*. Paz e Terra.

Freire, Paulo (2005b) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin.

Fujikura, Tatsuro (2013) *Discourses of Awareness. Development, Social Movements and the Practices of Freedom in Nepal*. Martin Chautari.

Gale, Trevor (2001) 'Critical policy sociology: Historiography, archaeology and genealogy as methods of policy analysis', *Journal of Education Policy*, 16(5), pp. 379–393.

Garland, David (2014) 'What is a "history of the present"? On Foucault's genealogies and their critical preconditions', *Punishment and Society*, 16(4), pp. 365–384.

Gaventa, John (1980) 'Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley', *American Political Science Association*, pp. 1–29.

Gaventa, John (2006) 'Finding the Spaces for Changes: A Power Analysis', *IDS Bulletin*, 37(6), pp. 23–33.

Geddes, Mike (2008) 'Inter-organizational Relationships in Local and Regional Development Partnerships', in *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations*. Oxford Handbooks Online, pp. 1–32.

Gergen, K. J. and Gergen, M. M. (2008) 'Social Construction and Research as Action', in *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Participative Inquiry and Practice*, pp. 159–171.

Ghorashi, Halleh and Wels, Harry (2008) 'Beyond Complicity: A Plea for Engaged Ethnography', in *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life*, pp. 231–252.

Gibbon, Marion (2002) 'Doing a Doctorate Using a Participatory Action Research Framework in the Context of Community Health', *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), pp. 546–558.

Gill, John and Johnson, Phil (2002) *Research Methods for Managers*. Third Edit. Sage Publications.

Girei, Emanuela (2016) 'NGOs, Management and Development: Harnessing Counter-Hegemonic Possibilities', *Organization Studies*, 37(2), pp. 193–212.

Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011) *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness*.

Government of Nepal (2015) *The Constitution of Nepal*.

Green, Duncan (2015) 'Fit for the Future? Development trends and the role of international NGOs', *Oxfam Discussion Papers*, (June), pp. 1–20.

Green, Duncan (2016) *How change happens*. Oxford University Press.

Greenberg, S. and Mathoho, M. (2010) *Conceptual framework on public participation and development*, *Research project: 'Participation and Development from the Perspective of the Poor'*.

Gronemeyer, Marianne (2010) 'Helping', in Sachs, Wolfgang (ed.) *The Development Dictionary*. Zed Books, pp. 55–73.

Gulrajani, Nilima (2014) 'Organising for donor effectiveness: An analytical framework for improving aid effectiveness', *Development Policy Review*, 32(1), pp. 89–112.

Gulrajani, Nilima and Swiss, Liam (2018) 'Donor proliferation to what ends? New donor countries and the search for legitimacy', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. Taylor & Francis, pp. 1–21.

Hart, Gillian (2001) 'Development critiques in the 1990s: Culs de sac and promising paths', *Progress in Human Geography*, 25(4), pp. 649–658.

Hart, Gillian (2010) 'D/developments after the Meltdown', *Antipode*, 41, pp. 117–141.

Hartch, Todd (2015) *The Prophet of Cuernavaca: Ivan Illich and the Crisis of the West*. Oxford University Press.

Haugaard, Mark (2003) 'Reflections on Seven Ways of Creating Power', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6(1), pp. 87–113.

Haugaard, Mark (2010) 'Power: A "family resemblance" concept', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(4), pp. 419–438.

Hellum, Anne, Derman, Bill, Feltoe, Geoff, Sithole, Ellen, Stewart, Julie and Tsanga, Amy (2013) 'Rights claiming and rights making in Zimbabwe: A study of three human rights NGOs', *Human Rights, Power and Civic Action: Comparative Analyses of Struggles for Rights in Developing Societies*, (2013), pp. 22–54.

Heron, John and Reason, Peter (2008) 'Extending Epistemology within a Co-operative Inquiry', in *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Sage Publications, pp. 366–380.

Hollway, Wendy (1989) *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology: Gender, Meaning and Science*. Reprint 19. Sage Publications.

Howell, Kerry E. (2013a) 'Constructivist and Participatory Paradigms of Inquiry - Introducing Action Research', *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology*, pp. 88–101.

Howell, Kerry E. (2013b) 'Michel Foucault', in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology*. Sage Publications, pp. 168–181.

Hutt, Michael (2020) 'The changing face of Nepal', *Current History*, 119(816), pp. 141–145.

IARAN (2017) *The Future of Aid INGOs in 2030*.

Impey, Kathy and Overton, John (2014) 'Developing partnerships: The assertion of local control of international development volunteers in South Africa', *Community Development Journal*, 49(1), pp. 111–128.

Janoski, Thomas (1998) 'Introduction to Citizenship', in *Citizenship and Civil Society: A Framework of Rights and Obligations in Liberal, Traditional, and Social Democratic Regimes*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–27.

Janoski, Thomas, Alford, Robert, Hicks, Alexander and Schwartz, Mildred A. (2005) *The Handbook of Political Sociology. States, civil societies, and globalization*. Cambridge University Press.

Kalberg, Stephen (1980) 'Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 85(5), pp. 1145–1179.

Kapoor, Ilan (2002) 'Capitalism, culture, agency: Dependency versus postcolonial theory', *Third World Quarterly*, 23(4), pp. 647–664.

Kapoor, Ilan (2008) *The Postcolonial Politics of Development*. Routledge.

Kara (2018) *Research Ethics in the Real World. Euro-Western and Indigenous Perspectives*. Policy Press.

Karkee, Rajendra and Comfort, Jude (2016) 'NGOs, Foreign Aid, and Development in Nepal', *Frontiers in Public Health*, 4(August), pp. 1–5.

Katsiaficas, Dalal, Futch, Valerie A., Fine, Michelle and Sirin, Selcuk R. (2011) 'Everyday hyphens: Exploring youth identities with methodological and analytic pluralism', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 8(2), pp. 120–139.

Kearins, Kate and Hooper, Keith (2002) 'Genealogical method and analysis', *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 15(5), pp. 733–757.

Kenley, Anoushka and Whittaker, Matt (2020) *Weathering the storm: PBE Covid Charity Tracker*.

Kenny, Kate (2008) '"Arriving Bearing Gifts...": Postcolonial Insights for Development Management', in Dar, Sadhvi and Cooke, Bill (eds) *The New Development Management*. Zed Books, pp. 56–73.

Khadka, Narayan (1997) 'Foreign Aid to Nepal: Donor Motivations in the Post-Cold War Period', *Asian Survey*, 37(11), pp. 1044–1061.

Kiely, Ray (1999) 'The last refuge of the noble savage: A critical assessment of post-development theory', *European Journal of Development Research*, 11(1), pp. 30–55.

Kindon, Sara, Pain, Rachel and Kesby, Mike (2007) *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. Routledge.

Kindornay, Shannon (2011) *From Aid to Development Effectiveness: A Working Paper*.

Knoke, David and Chen, Xinxiang (2009) 'Political Perspectives on Inter-organizational Networks', in *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations*. Oxford Handbooks Online, pp. 1–36.

Koirala-Azad, Shabnam (2009) 'Exploring the Intersection of Philanthropy, Research, and Scholarship in a Third World Context', *Social Justice*, 36(4), pp. 84–97.

Koro-Ljungberg, Mirka (2016) *Reconceptualizing Qualitative Research: Methodologies without Methodology*. Sage Publications.

Kusenbach, Margarethe (2003) 'Street phenomenology: The go-along as ethnographic research tool', *Ethnography*, 4(3), pp. 455–485.

Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (2001) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Second Edi. Verso.

Lammerink, Marc P. (1998) 'Community managed rural water supply: experiences from participatory action research in Kenya, Cameroon, Nepal, Pakistan, Guatemala and Colombia', *Community Development Journal*, 33(4), pp. 342–352.

Latouche, Serge (1991) *La planète des naufragés: Essai sur l'après-développement*. La Découverte / essais.

Lay Lee, Tang (2012) 'Rethinking power and rights-promoting NGOs in China', *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 5(3), pp. 343–351.

Lehman, Glen (2005) 'A critical perspective on the harmonisation of accounting in a globalising world', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 16(7), pp. 975–992.

Lester, Stan (1999) *An introduction to phenomenological research*.

Lewis, David (2008) 'Nongovernmentalism and the Reorganization of Public Action', in *The New Development Management*, pp. 41–55.

Liebenberg, Linda, Wood, Michele and Wall, Darlene (2018) 'Participatory Action Research with Indigenous Youth and their Communities', in Iphofen, Ron and Tolich, Martin (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Ethics*. SAGE, pp. 339–353.

Lilja, Mona and Vinthagen, Stellan (2014) 'Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance?', *Journal of Political Power*. Routledge, 7(1), pp. 107–126.

Lister, Sarah (2000) 'Power in partnership ? An analysis of an NGO's relationships with its partners', *Journal of International Development*, 12, pp. 227–239.

Lotia, Nuzhat and Hardy, Cynthia (2008) 'Critical Perspectives on Collaboration', in *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations*. Oxford Handbooks Online, pp. 1–26.

Lukes, Steven (2005) *Power: A Radical View*. Second Edi. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lukes, Steven (2015) 'Robert Dahl on power', *Journal of Political Power*. Routledge, 8(2), pp. 261–271.

Mackenzie, John, Tan, Poh-Ling, Hoverman, Suzanne and Baldwin, Claudia (2012) 'The value and limitations of Participatory Action Research methodology', *Journal of Hydrology*, 474, pp. 11–21.

Mandell, Myrna and Steelman, Toddi (2003) 'Understanding what can be accomplished through interorganizational innovations: The importance of typologies, context and management strategies', *Public Management Review*, 5(2), pp. 197–224.

Martens, Kerstin (2002) 'Mission Impossible? Defining Nongovernmental Organizations', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 13(3), pp. 271–285.

Martin Chautari (2015) *Stakeholders for Universal Connectivity in Nepal*.

Martin Chautari (2016) *Deliver Through Mobiles First*.

Martin Chautari (2017) *The Quality Bottleneck*.

Mason, Jennifer (2002) *Qualitative researching*. 2nd Editio, *Qualitative Research Journal*. 2nd Editio. Sage Publications.

Mawdsley, Emma (2018) 'The "Southernisation" of development?', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 59(2), pp. 173–185.

Mawdsley, Emma, Savage, Laura and Kim, Sung Mi (2014) 'A "post-aid world"? Paradigm shift in foreign aid and development cooperation at the 2011 Busan High Level Forum', *Geographical Journal*, 180(1), pp. 27–38.

May, Tim and Perry, Beth (2011) 'Reflexive Practice', in *Social Research & Reflexivity: Content, Consequences and Context*. Sage Publications, pp. 83–100.

McDougall, Cynthia, Jiggins, Janice, Pandit, Bishnu Hari, Thapa Magar Rana, Sushila K. and Leeuwis, Cees (2013) 'Does Adaptive Collaborative Forest Governance Affect Poverty? Participatory Action Research in Nepal's Community Forests', *Society and Natural Resources*, 26(11), pp. 1235–1251.

Mcgee, Rosie (2016) 'Power and Empowerment Meet Resistance: A Critical, Action-Oriented Review of the Literature', *IDS Bulletin*, 47(5).

McMichael, Philip (2005) 'Globalization', in Janoski, Thomas, Alford, Robert, Hicks, Alexander, and Schwartz, Mildred A. (eds) *The Handbook of Political Sociology. States, civil societies and globalization*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 587–606.

Menashy, Francine and Shields, Robin (2017) 'Unequal partners? Networks, centrality, and aid to international education', *Comparative Education*. Taylor & Francis, 53(4), pp. 495–517.

Mercer, Claire (2002) 'NGOs, civil society and democratization: a critical review of the literature', *Progress in Development Studies 2,1*, 2(5), pp. 1–19.

Mercer, Claire (2003) 'Performing partnership: Civil society and the illusions of good governance in Tanzania', *Political Geography*, 22(7), pp. 741–763.

Midgley, Gerald (2011) 'Theoretical Pluralism in Systemic Action Research', *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 24(1), pp. 1–15.

Midgley, Gerald, Nicholson, John D. and Brennan, Ross (2017) 'Dealing with challenges to methodological pluralism: The paradigm problem, psychological resistance and cultural barriers', *Industrial Marketing Management*, 62, pp. 150–159.

Mills, Sarah (2003) *Michel Foucault*. Routledge.

Moeran, Brian (2009) 'From participant observation to observant participation', in *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life*. Sage Publications, pp. 139–155.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (1984) 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *boundary 2*, 12(3), pp. 333–358.

Nola, Robert (1998) 'Knowledge, discourse, power and genealogy in Foucault', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 1(2), pp. 109–154.

Nordby, Erlend, Claussen, Jens and Shakya, Pushpa Lal (2017) *Development Finance Assessment for Nepal*.

Nyberg, Daniel and Delaney, Helen (2014) 'Critical ethnographic research: Negotiations, influences, and interests', in *Critical Management Research: Reflections from the Field*, pp. 63–80.

O'Brien, Nina F. and Evans, Sandra K. (2017) 'Civil Society Partnerships: Power Imbalance and Mutual Dependence in NGO Partnerships', *Voluntas*, 28(4), pp. 1399–1421.

OECD (2003) 'Rome Declaration on Harmonisation', *Harmonising Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery*, (February), pp. 1–8.

OECD (2012) *Managing Risks in Fragile and Transitional Contexts: The Price of Success?*

Ojha, Hemant (2013) 'Counteracting hegemonic powers in the policy process: critical action research on Nepal's forest governance', *Critical Policy Studies*. Routledge, 7(3), pp. 242–262.

Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness (2010) *Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles*.

Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness (2011) *The Siem Reap CSO Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*.

Overton, John and Storey, Donovan (2004) 'Aid and partnership: The effectiveness of relationships', *Development Bulletin*, 5(65), pp. 41–45.

Panday, Devendra Raj (2011) *Looking at Development and Donors. Essays from Nepal*. Martin Chautari.

Pantazidou, Maro (2012) *What Next for Power Analysis? A Review of Recent Experience with the Powercube and Related Frameworks*.

Peet, Richard and Hartwick, Elaine (2009) *Theories of Development: Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives*. Second Edi. The Guilford Press.

Petty, Nicola J., Thomson, Oliver P. and Stew, Graham (2012) 'Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 1: Introducing the philosophy of qualitative research', *Manual Therapy*, 17(4), pp. 267–274.

Pickard, Miguel (2010) 'Reflections on relationships: the nature of partnership according to five NGOs in southern Mexico', in *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, pp. 135–142.

Porter, Doug J. (1995) 'The Homesickness of Development Discourses', in *Power of Development*, pp. 63–86.

Pradhan, Kishor and Zellmann, Conrad (2018) 'Aid Data Needs and Use Cases in Nepal', *Data For Development In Nepal*, March, pp. 1–58.

Prasad, A. and Prasad, P. (2002) 'The Coming of Age of Interpretive Organizational Research', *Organizational Research Methods*, 5(1), pp. 4–11.

Querejazu, Amaya (2016) 'Encountering the Pluriverse: Looking for Alternatives in Other Worlds', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 59(2).

Raffnsøe, Sverre, Mennicken, Andrea and Miller, Peter (2019) 'The Foucault Effect in Organization Studies', *Organization Studies*, 40(2), pp. 155–182.

Rahnema, M. (2010) 'Poverty', in Sachs, Wolfgang (ed.) *The Development Dictionary*. Zed Books.

Rahnema, Majid (1991) 'Global Poverty: A Pauperizing Myth', *Interculture - International Journal of Intercultural and Transdisciplinary Research*, XXIV(111).

Rahnema, Majid (1992) 'Participation', in Sachs, Wolfgang (ed.) *The Development Dictionary*. London: Zeb Books, pp. 116–131.

Rathi, Dinesh, Given, Lisa M. and Forcier, Eric (2014) 'Interorganisational partnerships and knowledge sharing: the perspective of non-profit organisations (NPOs)', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 18(5), pp. 867–885.

Reason, Peter and Bradbury, Hilary (2008) *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Sage Publications.

Rigg, Jonathan and Oven, Katie (2015) 'Building liberal resilience? A critical review from developing rural Asia', *Global Environmental Change*. Elsevier Ltd, 32, pp. 175–186.

Rigg, Jonathan, Oven, Katie J., Basyal, Gopi Krishna and Lamichhane, Richa (2016) 'Between a rock and a hard place: Vulnerability and precarity in rural Nepal', *Geoforum*. Elsevier Ltd, 76, pp. 63–74.

Rudrum, Sarah (2016) 'Institutional ethnography research in Global South settings: The role of texts', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2016(December), pp. 1–8.

Sachs, Wolfgang (2010) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Second Edi. Zed Books.

Sahlins, Marshall (2002) *Waiting for Foucault, Still*.

Said, Edward W. (1979) *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.

Sandwick, Talia, Fine, Michelle, Greene, Andrew Cory, Stoudt, Brett G., Torre, María Elena and Patel, Leigh (2018) 'Promise and Provocation: Humble Reflections on Critical Participatory Action Research for Social Policy', *Urban Education*, 53(4), pp. 473–502.

Schaaf, Rebecca (2015) 'The rhetoric and reality of partnerships for international development', *Geography Compass*, 9(2), pp. 68–80.

Scott, Charles E. (2009) 'Foucault, Genealogy, Ethics', *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 34(4), pp. 350–367.

Scott, James C. (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale University Press.

Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.

Sharma, Kishor (2011) 'Foreign Aid, Governance and Economic Development in Nepal', *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, 33(2), pp. 95–115.

Shiva, Vandana (1988) *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*. North Atlantic Books.

Slater, David and Bell, Morag (2002) 'Aid and the Geopolitics of the Post-Colonial: Critical Reflections on New Labour's Overseas Development Strategy', *Development and Change*, 33(2), pp. 335–360.

Social Welfare Council (no date) 'SWC Information Bulletin'.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1983) 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in. Harvard University Press, pp. 66–111.

Standing, Guy (2010) 'Social Protection', in *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, pp. 53–67.

Swantz, Marja Liisa (2008) 'Participatory Action Research as Practice', in Reason, Peter and Bradbury, Hilary (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Sage Publications, pp. 31–48.

SWC (1992) *The Social Welfare Act, 2049 (1992)*. Nepal.

Sykes, Chris and Treleaven, Lesley (2009) 'Critical Action Research and Organizational Ethnography', in *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life*. Sage Publications, pp. 215–230.

Tanala, Masako (2011) 'The Changing Roles of NGOs in Nepal: Promoting Emerging Rights-Holder Organizations for Inclusive Aid', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 22(3), pp. 494–517.

Taylor, Charles (2002) 'Modern social imaginaries', *Public Culture*, 14(1), pp. 91–124.

Taylor, Janelle S. (2018) 'What the Word "Partnership" Conjoins, and What It Does', *Medicine Anthropology Theory*, 5(2), pp. 1–6.

Tomlinson, Frances (2005) 'Idealistic and Pragmatic Versions of the Discourse of Partnership', *Organization Studies*, 26(8), pp. 1169–1188.

Torre, María Elena, Fine, Michelle, Stoudt, Brett G. and College, John Jay (2012) *Critical Participation Action Research as Public Science*.

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research And Indigenous Peoples (Second Edition)*. Second Edi.

Ulvila, Marko and Hossain, Farhad (2002) 'Development NGOs and Political Participation of the Poor in Bangladesh and Nepal', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 13(2), pp. 149–163.

United Nations (2004) *Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and UN-Civil Society Relationships*, *The Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Partnerships and UN-Civil Society Relationships*.

Välikangas, Anita and Seeck, Hannele (2011) 'Exploring the Foucauldian interpretation of power and subject in organizations', *Journal of Management and Organization*, 17(6), pp. 812–827.

Veltmeyer, Henry and Bowles, Paul (2018) *The Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies*. Routledge.

van der Waal, Kees (2008) 'Getting Going: Organizing Ethnographic Fieldwork', in *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life*, pp. 23–39.

Watts, Michael (1995) 'The Crisis of Development', in Crush, Jonathan (ed.) *Power of Development*, pp. 44–62.

Westerveld, Rosie (2019) 'Critical Participatory Action Research: Embarking on an Unpredictable Journey', in Clift, Bryan C., Gore, Julie, Bekker, Sheree, Batlle, Ioannis Costas, Chudzikowski, Katharina, and Hatchard, Jenny (eds) *Myths, Methods, and Messiness: Insights for Qualitative Research Analysis - Edited Volume of the Proceedings of the 5th Annual Qualitative Research Symposium at the University of Bath*, pp. 79–91.

White, Sarah C. (1996) 'Depoliticising development: The uses and abuses of participation', *Development in Practice*, 6(1), pp. 6–15.

World Economic Forum (2013) *The Future Role of Civil Society*, *World Scenario Series*.

Ybema, Sierk, Yanow, Dvora, Wels, Harry and Kamsteeg, Frans (2009) *Organizational Ethnography. Studying the Complexities of Everday Life*. Sage Publications.