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International Development and the Globally Concerned European Subject

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Abstract

As a global project of engineering and imagining the world, international development shaped subjectivities and societies, engaging with what Ann Laura Stoler (2008) has referred to as 'imperial ruins': what was left after colonialism. Ironically, international development as a project is deeply unhistorical in its 'forgetfulness' of colonial histories and postcolonial entanglements. This essay discusses international development in relation to spatial organization of the world, asking how development creates certain spaces of imagination where actions become meaningful while the wider context is made invisible, as well as allowing uncomfortable political issues - such as those concerning asylum seekers and the power of multinational corporations in creating poverty – within and outside the borders of the nation-state to become irrelevant. At the same time that individuals from different parts of the world are brought into contact with each other, development creates a platform that structures these relationships as existing outside global political contexts.

Introduction

Zygmunt Bauman states in Liquid Modernity that the present state of modernity can now be described as post-panoptical where we have 'the end of the area of mutual engagement' (2000, 11). As Bauman claims – based on Michel Foucault's insights – the Panopticon, the previous key metaphor of modern power, was a 'model of mutual engagement' where those in power were bound to particular spaces (10). The prime technique of power in the present is, however, extraterritorial and can more accurately be described as 'escape, slippage, elision and avoidance' instead of engagement (11).

It can seem peculiar to initiate a discussion on international development with an emphasis on non-involvement, when it is clear that international development involves intervention of some kind. As my discussion empha- sizes, international development involves a particular way of imagining the world as disjuncture in Arjun Appadurai's (1996) sense – of separate spaces existing to some extent apart in time and space – and thus the imagination of a particular kind of involvement. That means that a particular kind of non-involvement becomes also more plausible and secure. My discussion more specifically points out how discourses of international development in Europe foster the imagination of a neoliberal European subject that is a global concern and which makes it ironically easier to turn a blind eye towards other encounters within and outside Europe, that are also entangled with past colonial histories. The racialized context of development as encounters between differently historically positioned individuals becomes simul- taneously hidden. As I suggest, this power of international development to imagine the world is based on an underlying memory – even nostalgia – of a past where the world was seen as neatly divided into clearly bounded spaces. As such, it coexists with ideas underlying the current perception of the 'crisis' of multiculturalism in Europe that revolve around Europe as uniform and homogeneous before an era of multiculturalism (Fortier 2007). European and western ideas of international development and ideas of multi-culturalism thus are ultimately based on the same histories, although as fields of engagements they are discursively constructed in such a way that the links between them become invisible (Loftsdóttir 2012a).

Discourses of racial and cultural differences of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers thus coexist in Europe side by side with images and discourses of international development, which are usually not seen as having anything to do with race or racism (Loftsdóttir 2009; Harcourt 2009). Racism in Europe, even though not becoming less salient, has for the last few decades taken new

forms, in which economic and cultural differences are emphasized more strongly (Harrison 1995; 2002, 49), as is reflected in how the bodies of the asylum seekers and refugees have taken centre stage as markers of difference (Ponzanesi and Blaagaard 2011, 5). My discussion here reflects how various NGOs and multilateral institutions construct the globally concerned European subject (Phillips and Ilcan 2003) through the emphasis on consumption in Europe as a key issue in transforming people's lives in distant places, while completely ignoring the historical interconnectivity between different parts of the world. I contextualize this issue in the European context with an example from Iceland.

The example of Iceland clearly articulates the issues at stake in global power dynamics, perhaps because of its ambiguous position as a firmly established western nation but with a past as a Danish dependency (Loftsdóttir 2012b). My goal is not to give a full picture of Icelandic international development but to draw out a few issues to illustrate my point. My discussion critically evaluates international aid discourses, the term having historically different meanings from humanitarian aid (the former generally referring to activities intended to promote long-term change, while 'humanitarian aid' is usually seen as referring to responses to sudden emergencies). I still take into account the blurring of boundaries between international development and humanitarian aid, which scholars have increasingly recognized as never being fully separate while also becoming increasingly blurred in popular discourse (Crewe and Axelby 2013, 4).

The discussion starts by stressing the importance of problematizing international development based on particular imaginations of the past, present and future. These are sustaining spatial categories that are strongly connected to past colonial relationships and, hence, constitute a part of contemporary politics. These key themes are then used to understand the instrumental role of the increased commercialization of aid through the discursive creation of spaces of development that makes non-engagement in other practices possible and understandable. I divide the discussion into two parts: one focusing on the commercialization of international development in the European context, and the other by focusing on the inclusion or silencing of particular issues. Finally, I briefly discuss how these are expressed in particular European contexts.

Critical Background: Disconnected World

International development as a particular field of activity is generally seen as originating in the postwar period, where it was entangled with Cold War politics and an emphasis on the free market, and which was based on older models of linear progress and modernization (Rist 1997, 73). It transformed newly independent countries that were breaking away from European colonial rule into 'developing' or underdeveloped countries that needed to 'modernize'. The structural and socioeconomic consequences were quickly criticized by Marxist-inspired dependency and world-system theorists in the 1970s[1], but later critical research strongly influenced by postcolonial perspectives has looked more closely at how discursively different subjectivities and relationships have been created through the idea of development itself (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 2006). International development involves thus both those who are subjected to international development as well as those initiating it (see also Kapoor 2005). Recently, other scholars have warned against the tendency among postcolonial scholars to see international development as a monolithic force and thus stressing that different actors need to be recognized and who operate on different levels pursuing diverse agendas (Mosse 2005; De Sardan 2005). Unfortunately, this important point is often made by dismissing the postcolonial angle as such, i.e. the attention that it draws to global power relationships and the embeddedness of the present in colonial histories. Ideas of modernity so important to international development are themselves embedded – as Escobar's (2007) perspective shows – in a violent colonial encounter rather than in the European Enlightenment as is commonly popularized by those advocating international development. My analysis is aligned with that stress the importance of analysing the larger historical structures in which these actors are embedded, as well as how power not only operates within settings or domains but 'also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves' (Wolf 1990, 586). Through such processes, particular subjects are made 'possible' and gain legitimacy. This critical perspective shows how discourses of international development constituted a powerful way of creating the European or western subject (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 2006). As a global project of engineering and imagining the world, international development shapes European subjectivities and societies by engaging with what Ann Laura Stoler (2008) has referred to as 'imperial ruins': what was left after colonialism. Such perspectives are especially acute in the current historical moment, where

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[1] Marxist perspectives do still necessarily involve critical assessment of modernization and linear process as such.

international development has become increasingly diverse,[2] and are in the process of being shaped by neoliberal ideas of moral subjects.

For a deeper understanding of how international development constitutes and regulates particular European subjectivities – necessary for the argument of this essay – I will identify three key issues. They are tightly interlinked and thus somewhat difficult to disentangle, but I find it important here for the sake of clarity. Firstly, discourses of development involve a particular imagination of the world, where imagination has to be seen – stressed by Appadurai's work (1996, 31) – as constituting an organized field of social practices. For Appadurai, this means that imagination is a part of acting in the world (5–7), drawing attention to the interlinking of discourse and practice. Inter- national development has, for a long time, been extremely important in capturing the imagination of the European subject (Phillips and Ilcan 2003). But, with novel technologies and global interconnections in imagining the past and the future (Appadurai 1996), this imagination can be seen as taking place differently in the present.

Secondly, international development is based on – and creates – a physical spatialization of the world. The diverse terms used to capture these spaces reflect divisions such as third world/first world, North/South, developed countries/underdeveloped countries. While these concepts carry different political and historical references (Pletsch 1981; Bratman 2011, 1544), they work towards creating similar dualistic distinctions. Of particular significance is the extent to which these classifications are based on an underlying memory of a past where the world was, by Europeans, seen as neatly divided into well-defined spaces of colonized and colonizing – of those to be governed and those governing – intertwined with ideas of 'tradition' opposed to 'modernity'. Poverty is generally associated with non-western countries, seen as the conse- quence of a lack of modernity rather than as its result. Washington, DC, the capital of the world's leading political and military power, is often referred to as the 'central node in the making of development' (Roy 2010, x) because it is the home of many of the most powerful multilateral institutions (such as the IMF) while, paradoxically, it is a strongly racially segregated city, with an HIV epidemic rate similar to

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[2] These changes involve increased association of security and peace as key development issues (Duffield 2006; UNDP 2005, 169); the blurring of boundaries between humanitarian aid and development (UNDP 2005); the increased militarization of humanitarianism (Chhachhi and Herrera 2007); and the emergence of new actors from recently 'developed' nations that have brought new ways of doing development to the table (Harrison 2013).

that of Kenya and Uganda (Bratman 2011, 1549). This shows clearly how the categories on which international development is based hide the complex similarities and dissimilarities of poverty across different spaces.

Thirdly, international development is discursively constructed as existing outside the field of politics, which means that political problems are sanitized as technical problems, as James Ferguson's (1994) phrase 'anti-politics machine' emphasizes. This non-politicization of international development becomes particularly evident when considering the key role that large inter- national and national organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and USAID play in the economies of many countries, involving, for example, political decisions concerning resource allocation. Tania Murray Li (2007) explains that the identification of a problem by development institutions goes hand in hand with particular types of solutions that are designed and executed by experts. Thus, the process of 'rendering technical' also works at iden- tifying boundaries between experts and those to be directed (7). Along with poststructuralist approaches, these studies have emphasized how 'development operates as a ruling apparatus and gives rise to technologies, experts and apparatuses for the administration and transformation of many people's lives' (Ilcan and Phillips 2010, 846). As indicated, the imagination of international development as a field of activity is based on a particular mobilization of Europeans or westerners. Li (2007) captures this imagination well when she demonstrates how 'the will to improve' is an important part of this mobilization. Different actors in international development share the viewpoint that their roles are directed at the 'improvement' of others. International development's spatial separation of the third world and the first creates a particular 'developscape' which both separates and links people in different parts of the world by assigning them different roles (Loftsdóttir 2009). The concept of 'developscape' – obviously inspired by Appadurai's emphasis on different 'scapes' as key characteristics of a globalized world – draws attention to how international development involves images and dis- courses in the countries receiving and giving aid that have to be analysed and mapped out. International development is thus visible in altered ways in different parts of the world, enforcing a clear division between those who 'receive' and those who 'give' (Loftsdóttir 2009).

Recognizing these three characteristics of international development helps to contextualize international development in Stoler's (2008, 1993) understanding of the 'political life of imperial debris', where she stresses the need to continue recognizing how structures of dominance remain

after the 'end' of colonialism. Her use of the term 'ruins' seeks to capture not only the static relics of colonization, but also the social ruination of people's lives and what they are left with. Gendered inequality has been persistent in international development, with feminist critiques pointing to how the discourse of women's rights is often used to advocate other interests of western countries, in addition to reinforcing stereotypical views of the societies in question (Moran 2010; Otto 2006). The removal of international development from historical and global power relations ensures that the issue of colonialism remains hidden and that the 'imperial debris' of European colonialism is rendered irrelevant or non-existent. In general, discussions of racism and racialization have been strikingly absent in the analysis of international development, although recent research indicates that racialization is highly relevant as intersecting with past colonial categories (Goudge 2003; Leonard 2010; Loftsdóttir 2009).

Neoliberalism and Spaces of Development

Neoliberal policies, generally seen as emergent in the 1980s, affected international development in various ways, such as increased emphasis on privatization, a reduction of government expenses, and pressuring the state to scale back expenditures and responsibilities in various sectors.[3] Since the early 1990s, development agencies have strongly emphasized NGOs as responding to neoliberal emphases on minimizing governmental expenses (Ilcan and Phillips 2010, 862), and thus as the key to the wider success of development, but with contradictory consequences (Fisher 1997). As emphasized by critical theorists, however, neoliberalism is not only about economics, but also constitutes a social and political project (Jessop 2013). Privatization and market functions are indeed given primary importance, but various aspects of social life are also transformed into a 'marketable commodity' (Gledhill 2004, 342). This means that neoliberalism is not only concerned with those aspects normally associated with the market, but also with markers identified as 'culture' that are reified and commoditized (Moore 2004, 78).[4] Increased emphasis on NGOs and commercialization has affected the European developscape in various ways, as I will show below.

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[3] However, as argued by Gledhill (2004, 338), the rhetoric of 'rolling back the state' often means no less use of state power and resources, as decisions are increasingly made back stage.
[4] Some scholars see the increased move towards security and authoritarianism in the post 9/11 environment as signifying a move away from neoliberalism (Hyatt 2011, 106); however, of importance here is how security discourses have become acute symbols of the present. As Fassin (2013, 217) argues in the context of France, instead of police practices being modified according to the law, laws and institutions are shaped to adhere better to police practices, where socially marginalized groups are increasingly subjects of surveillance.

It is also important to realize that since the turn of the millennium, development practitioners have emphasized the remaking of development as involving deeper concerns with human development rather than only economic growth, the latter spoken about as characteristic of the earlier paradigms (Roy 2010, 7). In this context a construction of a particular moral subject becomes particularly acute. Andrea Muehlebach's research has drawn attention to how neoliberalism involves a particular type of ethical or moral subject where people are mobilized into various forms of voluntary labour as 'good citizens' (Muehlebach 2012, 6). International development has simultaneously been 'popularized' through various marketing campaigns, evident for example in the UN's Millennium Development goals of 2000 (Biccum 2007). As Biccum points out, such marketing aims at creating a 'global citizen' who 'embraces the architecture of globalization under neoliberal terms of trade' (1114), with internationally recognized celebrities frequently used to advocate particular causes or institutions (Ponte, Richey and Baab 2009), and institutions themselves gaining celebrities status (Kapoor 2013, 2). Taken together, the neoliberal subject is thus mobilized within international development as a 'global citizen' or a moral subject to assist in the fight against poverty, which simultaneously engages with the preexisting ideas of Europe as a site of civilization and source of moral order. Concerns with global poverty, as shown by Roy (2010, 12), have thus become important in defining the citizens of the global North and the 'West's place in the world'. The emphasis on celebrity both promotes the brand itself and, as phrased by Kapoor (2013, 12), the '"caring" (Western) nation'. In the mid-1980s – especially during the 1983–84 famine in Ethiopia – international development agencies used images of black, starving children to raise funds (Cameron and Haanstra 2008, 1477). Even though these images were later strongly criticized, this period nevertheless signalled increased 'symbiotic' relationships between development institutions and the media (Wilson 2011, 321). As argued by Kapoor (2013, 5), celebrity humanitarianism has to be situated as important for current neoliberal economies that are strongly based on media-dominated societies; the new media are important, as argued by Appadurai (1996), in shaping the current imagination of the world.

Borders and Poverty in the West

What kind of invisibility does this commercialization of international development encourage within Europe? The placement of international development outside the field of politics in popular and official discourses – and as belonging mostly to particular spaces of the world – ensures that

difficult political questions do not have to be dealt with, such as global inequalities and the role of global corporations in maintaining and creating poverty. Neoliberalization has meant the consolidation of 'disposable workers' on a world stage with people working in sweatshops (Harvey 2005, 168). The items produced involve luxury brands such as Levi-Strauss jeans which, as Harvey (2005, 169) recounts, are produced mainly by women who have to work long hours under inhumane conditions. These often involve compulsory overtime, so that the working day is fourteen hours long, with only one toilet available for over two hundred workers, and extremely low salaries. A similar situation appears to hold true for the production of iPhones and iPads, which are currently popular consumption items in Europe (The New York Times, 25 January 2012). People working in factories and sweatshops do not seem to be significant targets of poverty reduction or intervention by development agencies; despite this, they still claim to be working towards the goal of long-term improvement in people's lives. Emphasis on the consumption prac-tices of European global citizens as a way of 'helping' or reducing poverty allows, furthermore, privileged Europeans comfortably to ignore larger questions of how global inequality and poverty are directly linked to the production of cheap commodities and food products for western markets, oftentimes produced under intolerable labour conditions (Ponte, Richey and Baab 2009, 313). Thus, instead of addressing these global inequalities, they are generally invisible to international and humanitarian aid promotions of poverty reduction or humanitarian action.

Another kind of invisibility that becomes easier to ignore with the commercialization of international development involves the way mobility is racialized and linked to colonial legacies. Migration in the context of international development remains largely ignored in development literature, i.e. how it involves the mobility of privileged westerners to impoverished populations who are themselves refused the same mobility. This mobility in relation to international development clearly shows the link to past colonial relationships where people continue to move between discursive spaces under stunningly different conditions: those from the 'South' are often denied rights of entry (Leonard 2010, 6), while those from the 'North' can go back and forth freely as development workers or tourists. As observed by Garner (2007, 69), the European mobility accord known as the Schengen Agreement is predicated on categories of mobility that overlap with distinctions of geography and class. As such, it can be seen as racialized in the sense of distinguishing the rights of predominantly European 'white' from third-world 'non-white' factors. It can be asked if these types of boundaries cannot be seen as 'imperial ruins' (Stoler 2008). As

stressed by Ponzanesi (2002, 212), migration in the present has to be linked to 'the legacy of different colonial empires'.

The borders between Europe and the rest of the world have become more pronounced with the increased restriction of human mobility that has charac- terized the last two decades in Europe. This is ironic considering that the fall of the Iron Curtain was widely seen as symbolizing a world that had moved beyond 'political and territorial divisions' (Fassin 2011, 216). The asylum seeker and the refugee have taken centre stage in discussions about potential risks to the nation-state, alongside intersecting concerns about Muslims and potential immigrants from Eastern Europe (due to the enlargement of the European Union) (Fassin 2011, 216; Ponzanesi and Blaagaard 2011). In public and political discussions, asylum seekers are criminalized, and thus transformed into a 'threat rather than people in need' (Malmberg 2004, 14). Detention centres – similar to prisons – where asylum seekers are kept in confinement have multiplied in Europe, justified by the need to protect national security and to manage 'potentially risky immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees' (Hall 2012, 4). This securitization of migration has been intensified with concerns about terrorism and the association of Muslims with terror (6). Detention centres can be described as 'sites of exceptions, where regimes of police prevail over regimes of rights' (Fassin 2011, 219) and as 'prisons in all but name' (Cleveland 2013, 7). Life in detention centres is characterized by tight control and surveillance over intimate aspects of daily life, translating into dehumanizing practices and often the denial of basic human rights (Cleveland 2013, 7; see also Hall 2012). As Hall (2012) shows, categories such as 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' are con- structed by the legal interpretations of decision-makers that are influenced by their institutional and political contexts. Through these practices, the binary distinctions are created that distinguish between 'legal' and 'illegal' populations, responsible citizens and non-citizens (Hall 2012, 9). Bauman's (2000) identification of the current atmosphere as post-panoptical, where the lack of mutual engagement is its main characteristic, is particularly apt here. The deportation of asylum seekers is often conducted out of sight from the public and media. The situation of a person who hopes to gain the status of refugee produces what Chaudhuri (2012, 192, 194) labels the 'non-status' of 'non-people', reduced to bare life in Agamben's (1998) sense. The disposable workers in sweatshops outside of Europe are also removed from mutual engagement, rendered invisible and physically absent from Europe even though they produce important commodities for European and western consumption.

Icelandic Visibility and Invisibility

Iceland is a small European country and a relatively insignificant player in global international development. Nevertheless, the Icelandic case provides insight into how new articulations of global, neoliberal practices concerning European subjects are expressed in particular localized European contexts, as well as the importance of adopting a postcolonial perspective in order to understand these articulations. What I try to highlight here is how discourses of aiding people outside Europe through international development are disjunctured from discussions about refugees and asylum seekers in Iceland. The Icelandic nation-state engaged in international development rather late on and only did so under strong public pressure. International development was embraced as a source of national pride and as signifying the responsibility of the Icelandic nation-state in a global community of nations (Loftsdóttir 2012a). This reflects Kapoor's (2005) point about how discourses of international development say often more about European identities than they do about their 'target' populations. Icelanders had routinely been described through the centuries in European sources as semi-savage, uncivilized and childlike. Icelandic nationalists strongly emphasized their desire that Icelanders should be recognized as belonging among 'civilized' colonizing nations and not with 'nature' nations as they phrased it, i.e. those who were colonized (Loftsdóttir 2012b). Public emphasis on engagement in international development can thus be better understood from a postcolonial perspective, where it is seen as interwoven with concerns about situating Icelanders with the colonizers and not the colonized, but also with the larger responsibilities of Iceland as a sovereign developed state (Loftsdóttir 2009).

There was still little interest in participating in international development in spite of establishing an official development institution in 1971, which reflected a general lack of interest by Icelandic governments in taking an active part in international organizations (Þórhallsson 2005). This changed in the late 1990s, when Iceland became much more internationally integrated, with Icelandic policy makers and the public emphasizing Iceland's important global role. The Icelandic economy was booming, which probably gave Icelanders further confidence in expanding their international presence in various ways, including the establishment of peacekeeping forces at the beginning of the new millennium (Loftsdóttir and Björnsdóttir 2010, 38; Björnsdóttir 2011). Nationalistic rhetoric in the media and public discourses expressed a lingering desire to be acknowledged as an important nation by other European nations. This desire was in part satisfied when Icelandic businessmen made a huge splash internationally, buying up and establishing

companies all over the world. The Icelandic Chamber of Commerce expressed a vision for Iceland in 2015: 'Iceland [should] stop comparing itself to the Nordic countries because after all we are in many ways superior to them in most respect'[5] (Icelandic Chamber of Commerce 2006, 22). International development and peacekeeping were seen by the Icelandic government as part of Iceland's increased global presence. Icelandic international development expanded in size and scope with, for example, peacekeeping units being established at the beginning of the millennium. They were, among other things, engaged in NATO operations in Afghanistan (Björnsdóttir 2011). The governmental discourse highlighted peacekeeping as an opportunity for Iceland to be a part of the 'international community' or, as phrased by the prime minister in his keynote speech to parliament in 2006, 'Icelanders are active participants in making a new world vision' (Morgunblaðið, 4 October 2006). The official document Iceland's Policy on Development Cooperation 2005–2009 states that through participating in international development, Iceland fulfills its 'political and moral obligation as a responsible member of the international community' (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2005, 12).[6]

The 2008 economic crash raised questions about Iceland's status within this community of the nations, and the boom period followd by the crash brought forward older anxieties with regard to full membership within a European community (Loftsdóttir 2014). Even though the government of Iceland reduced the scope and funding of official Icelandic aid after the crash, it became quite visible in the Icelandic developscape via campaigns by local NGOs and multilateral institutions to collect donations for various projects. These visions are in line with the more global development discourses outlined above, where neoliberal visions underline increased consumption and trade as the solution to the world's problems. In these advertisements, individuals are usually encouraged to buy particular products or services in order to assist a particular cause. I will offer a few examples of these practices here.

Icelandic UN organizations such as UNICEF and UNIFEM, the Icelandic Red Cross and local Icelandic NGOs such as ABC International, can be taken as examples of organizations that have used such marketing campaigns.[7] The national UNICEF committee in Iceland has sold items such as Christmas cards and t-shirts, and has also used celebrities to advertise its cause and for

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[5] 'Viðskiptaráð leggur til að Ísland hætti að bera sig saman við Norðurlöndin enda stöndum við þeim framar á flestum sviðum.'
[6] The Icelandic text literally states 'responsible nation in the society of nations'.
[7] ABC, established in 1988, focuses in assisting children in developing countries.

purposes of fundraising. It frequently invites Icelandic celebrities to particular countries and the celebrity then reports on the trip in the media. Icelandic singer Páll Óskar Hjálmtýsson visited Sierra Leone in 2011 to advertise the cause of UNICEF, and related his experiences to Icelandic newspapers and on television. In addition to emphasizing the poverty in Sierra Leone and the important role of UNICEF in Iceland in improving the lives of children, he also strongly emphasized how much the trip had affected him personally (Fréttatíminn, 2 December 2011). This corresponds with Goudge's analysis of recruiting leaflets for an international aid organization in the United States, where the leaflets highlighted the role of international development in changing the lives of the development worker (Goudge 2003, 15–16). The Icelandic NGO ABC successfully advertised its operations by emphasizing not only the donations collected from the general public but also by selling various products to raise funds. These included chocolate bars decorated with the faces of children in an African orphanage (whom the sale of the product presumably helped). ABC also places collection tins in many large stores in Iceland, which are illustrated with images of black children and can usually be seen when paying for particular products.

A similar emphasis is used by other institutions helping asylum seekers and refugees, such as in a project by the Red Cross in Iceland, which focuses on a lack of water in Africa. This follows a three-year agreement that the Red Cross made with Vífilfell, a major producer of soft drinks in Iceland and the distributor of international brands such as Coca-Cola and Fanta. The agreement revolves around a share of the profits made from selling the company's brand of sparkling water, which are then devoted to building wells in Malawi – specifically, contributing to the quality of life for women and girls. The spokesperson for Vífilfell proclaimed that the campaign is designed to raise awareness not only of the lack of water in Malawi, but also the luxury (munað) of access to water enjoyed by Icelanders (Red Cross Iceland 2013). A campaign advertisement shows a young, stylish, white woman drinking bottled water. In the window next to her is a reflection of a young black African woman in African clothing also drinking water. The text in the corner of the add claims 'each time you buy a bottle of Toppur you give three litres of pure water to Africa'.[8] This underlines the presumed links between consumption and human rights.

I have not chosen these examples because they are exceptional in any way, but precisely the opposite. As with other campaigns, they associate free market forces and the consumption of the 'first world citizen' with the expression of global responsibility for the 'poor' African or 'third

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[8] 'Í hvert skipti sem þú kaupir flösku af Toppi gefur þú 3 lítra af hreinu vatni til Afríku.'

world subject'. Furthermore, they suggest that through consumption practices, the problems of poverty will be reduced. It also makes invisible the connection between production and consumption, as one can take place without the other. Such advertisements emphasize Icelandic subjects as belonging within the 'West' or Europe as 'donors' of development, and imply that global poverty is completely separate from history and the destructive policies of European countries.

Simultaneously, the Icelandic government has been active in deporting as many of the country's growing numbers of asylum seekers as it can on the basis of the Dublin II regulation under the Schengen Agreement.[9] Seemingly without contradiction, such policies are implemented alongside images of the 'deserving development subject' in remote countries whose welfare is promoted in charity and NGO drives. In most cases, these asylum seekers have waited for more than a year to have their application processed. The average waiting time has been fifteen months, during which time asylum seekers languish without any knowledge of how or when their application will be considered. The great majority are ultimately deported without their application having been taken into consideration.[10] A recent example includes an Eritrean couple deported to two different countries after a wait of twenty-two months for their application to be considered, only to find that it would not be processed. Such treatment has been contested by the Icelandic public, and with relatively critical discussion of government policy by the Icelandic media. What I want to draw attention to is how poverty and lack of human rights – the catchphrases of international development – are somehow kept separate from international development concerns. Some of these asylum seekers come from the very same countries (e.g. Afghanistan and Iran) that European countries celebrate through their commitment to peacekeeping or international development.[11]

The absence of discussion about racism and racialization in analyses of international development strengthens the apolitical construction of international development, portrayed as completely removed from any social context or history. The images of international development

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[9] As explained by the Directorate of Immigration: 'Due to the geographical position of Iceland within Europe it is quite common for asylum seekers in Iceland to have applied for asylum or gained some kind of permit for stay in other Member States before they arrive in Iceland' (Útlendingastofnun 2014).

[10] Between 1996 and 2009, thirteen people were granted asylum, 194 were denied asylum and 247 were deported. In 2011, thirty-seven people were deported, compared to an average of nineteen people per year between 1996 and 2009. The number of people deported continues to being high (*Grapevine*, 5 December 2012).

[11] Since this essay was written, the government of Iceland has worked towards improving conditions for asylum seekers, including reducing the waiting time for responding to and processing applications.

popularize development and mobilize European subjects in the act of giving as globally responsible citizens. The world that these images offer the viewer is not of racism and mobility in different directions, but of poverty as stripped from contemporary and historical politics. The use of celebrities and the sale of various consumer items for fundraising purposes encode a strong neoliberal message whereby people are encouraged to solve the development 'problem' through increased consumption. This atmosphere allows people comfortably to ignore questions of how global inequality and poverty are directly linked to the production of cheap commodities for western markets, often produced under intolerable conditions (Ponte, Richey and Baab 2009, 313). This production is based on historical relationships of power shaped by the history of colonialism. The ability to remove development from global inequality and from contemporary discussions about 'crises' of multiculturalism, asylum seekers and refugees, constructs the racialized others in their own spaces as removed from Europe. This construction of spaces, where 'whiteness' and its linkage to power does not have to be reflected upon, resonates with the persistent self- perception of many European countries as belonging outside the history of colonialism (Keskinen et al. 2009; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Purtschert 2011).

Conclusions

International development is – in popular and official discourses – removed from uncomfortable political issues such as global inequality and racism; it is also removed from contemporary discussions about the 'crisis' of multiculturalism, asylum seekers and refugees. Reinforcing visions of natural borders of Europe as distinct from other parts of the world, international development can be seen as bringing substance to popular ideas of Europe now becoming more 'multicultural', with immigrants from poorer parts of the world seeking entrance. Such discourses completely ignore not only past mobilities, but also colonialism's role in transnational movement and displacement (Ponzanesi 2002; Smith 2003). The subjects of development and humanitarian assistance become racialized others, situated in their 'own' spaces, leaving uncomfortable issues connected to racism unquestioned. The lack of engagment that Bauman (2000) speaks about also characterizes those outside the space of development, such as asylum seekers or those defined as particular types of immigrants. Thus, international development creates certain spaces of imagination, where particular actions become meaningful and understandable. As such, international development engages with a nostalgic desire for a past that never was, comprising

certain types of involvement in affection for the 'other', but only for those who stay put in their own spaces. The emphasis on consumption as the solution to global problems and poverty contributes to the continued perception that colonial legacies are irrelevant to inequalities and lack of power.

We should also ask why, during a massive and far-reaching economic crisis in Europe, international development is increasingly hailed as a success story of global capitalism (UNDP 2013). By flagging various indicators that are supposed to measure 'development' objectively (social, health, educational, economic), international development is now presented as finally managing to lift people from poverty. Here, perhaps, the affective site of international development has to be acknowledged as not only creating particular subjectivities but also offering a sense of a world that is moving in a particular direction and, in fact, towards something 'better'. As such, it can be seen as implying an organized, goal-oriented world as opposed to one with no direction and without justice or progress. The world imagined through international development just has different interests at stake, where some actors have to gain (i.e. global capitalism). Furthermore, it is easy to care for others, to support human rights and the reduction of poverty if all you need do – via neoliberal style – is buy a particular product and enjoy.

Acknowledgement

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