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Religious actors, civil society, and the development agenda: the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion

Keywords: civil society, religion, development agenda, critical development, World Bank.

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Abstract

This article uses the World Bank's engagement with religious actors to analyse their differentiated role in setting the development agenda raising three key issues. First, engagements between international financial institutions (IFIs) and religious actors are formalised thus excluding many of the actors embedded within communities in the South. Secondly, the varied politics of religious actors in development are rarely articulated and a single position is often presented. Thirdly, the potential for development alternatives from religious actors excluded from these engagements is overlooked, due in part to misrecognition of the mutually constitutive relationship between secular and sacral elements in local contexts.

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades there has been a shift in the way the development agenda is negotiated and set characterised by the opening of the 'development space' to a broader range of actors, particularly civil society. Critical approaches to this opening have identified the asymmetries of power between different civil society actors in the one hand, and between civil society actors and international financial institutions (IFIs) on the other. This has resulted in the inclusion of civil society actors that adopt existing development orthodoxy in the development space and the exclusion of those that challenge this orthodoxy. Within this literature there is an emerging emphasis on the agency of those actors excluded, and reconstructive critical approaches have highlighted the potential for alternative development ideas and practices from these actors, particularly within the South. However this analysis is rarely extended to religious actors despite growing recognition of the role played by religious actors in development at the local and national levels in the South and at the international level (Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Haynes, 2007). This article seeks to open a critical research agenda on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of religious actors in the development space at the

international and local levels.[1] We argue that analysis of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of civil society actors in the development space needs to be extended to religious actors and that the potential of these actors for providing development alternatives and counter-hegemonic agency needs to be given more consideration. We are particularly concerned with relations between civil society actors and IFIs, as it is these relations that best exemplify the opening of the development space and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. We have chosen the World Bank as a site for analysis because in recent years it has broadened its development approach to include civil society actors and has created an explicit space for engaging with religious actors in development.

In examining these dynamics we make a three-fold argument. First, in both the literature on religious actors in development and the engagement between IFIs and religious actors the focus is on formalised religious actors, often referred to as faith-based organisations or FBOs, and as a result informal actors are often overlooked in negotiating, setting and contesting the development agenda.[2] Secondly, the varied politics of religious actors are rarely articulated. Unlike secular civil society actors, religious actors tend to be viewed homogenously and separately from other civil society actors and from the communities in which they are embedded. We contend that religious actors are deeply involved in both top-down development *and* in contesting development; thus a singular form of agency cannot be generalised to all religious actors involved in development. Thirdly, underpinning both of these limitations is a lack of consideration for the mutually constitutive relationship between secular and sacral[3] elements at the local level and increasingly at the international level. This relationship

[1] We use the term 'local' to refer to political and social spaces existing at the sub-national level within nation-states as defined by the peoples that constitute said spaces. Such a space can be limited in size and scale, such as a particular community centred on a village or number of villages or an urban locality. Local can also refer to a political and social space extending across provinces, federal states, autonomous regions or other sub-national units. Local can also refer to a non-territorial political and social space within which development, civil society actors, and religious actors are embedded such as among particular ethnic groups, indigenous communities, and class and caste groups. Local in not used as a substitute for 'national', especially when being analysed in comparison to 'international'.

[2] We use the term 'religious actors' rather than faith-based organisations when recognising both formal and informal actors associated with religious organisations and communities

[3] We adopt Haynes' three-fold definition of religion as 'to do with: the idea of *transcendence*, that is, it relates to supernatural realities; with *sacredness*, that is, as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and with *ultimacy*, that is, it relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence.' (2006, p.223) These attributes constitute what we have called 'sacral' elements that exist in the spaces of development.

shapes the way the development agenda is negotiated, set, and contested in different locations and must be considered in research on the role of religion in development and in the practice of development in the field, particularly in the context of ongoing engagement between religious actors and IFIs and between secular and religious civil society actors.

At the outset it is important to make two disclaimers. First, we are not advocating that religion holds the solution to deficiencies in the development agenda at the international, national, or local levels. Nor are we suggesting that religious actors, by definition, are more capable of providing development alternatives. We adopt an open critical perspective on religion in development, analysing the different forms it takes and the different contributions it makes to development whether positive, negative, and/or ambiguous. Secondly, we are not suggesting that religion be simply grafted onto existing ways of understanding or practicing development. We do not wish to 'add' religion to what is already known about development, rather we are analysing religion because it is a primary element in most of the locations where development interventions take place. Religion exists in the lives of those subject to the policies derived from development agendas and in the lives of those formulating such policies. Yet critical discussions of the role of religious actors in development have often overlooked many of the ways that religious actors contribute to improving people's lives.

This article begins by discussing the opening of the development space to civil society, including religious actors. While the opening of the development space has altered the relationship between states, international development agencies, and civil society, the focus of this article is restricted to the enhanced role for civil society actors in their dealings with IFIs. The second section uses existing literature to analyse the critical reading of this opening and presents a typology of civil society actors included in, and excluded from, the development space. The third section applies this critical reading to religious actors using the example of the World Bank and its engagement with religious actors. The fourth section builds upon the case study to infer upon the way IFIs such as the World Bank favour formalised organisations and exclude other religious actors. The final section assesses the shortcomings of the dominant critical approach in identifying these dynamics and suggests further directions in research before the article concludes.

2 OPENING THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The development agenda refers here to the issues defined as 'problems' and the solutions proposed to alleviate or at least reduce the impacts of these problems. Setting the development agenda involves gathering knowledge about conditions in the South, which of these conditions require intervention, which agencies will intervene, who will be partners in these interventions, and the policies to guide these interventions. Since the early 1990s the actors involved in negotiating and setting the development agenda and implementing development projects have broadened significantly. The political space for negotiating and setting the development agenda, termed the 'development space' here, has been opened to a range of actors from academics to professional practitioners, planners to think-tanks, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to representatives from transnational corporations. This enables these actors to participate in the process of defining development priorities, formulating suitable polices, and implementing these policies.

Given the opening of the development space, the question of 'who sets the development agenda?' has become crucial for critical scholars. It has been argued that knowledge underpins the setting of the development agenda and is concentrated in IFIs, particularly the World Bank and regional development banks, as well as influential bilateral aid donors. Since the shift away from state-led development towards market-led development in the 1970s the power of IFIs has increased as they control both knowledge to set development priorities and material capacity to implement them (Bøås and McNeill, 2004, pp. 3-6). The development agenda espoused by IFIs came under heavy criticism throughout the 1980s and 1990s and the response of IFIs has been refereed to as a 'new kind of synthesis' that moves away from strict neoliberal doctrine and reconsiders the role of the state, the need for good governance, and the impacts of market-led adjustments on furthering poverty (Öniş and Şenses, 2005, p. 273). This has been a complex process involving multiple actors and the set of ideas emerging from this process remain heavily contested. However, one clear and significant outcome of this process is that IFIs have opened a space for other actors to negotiate and set the development agenda (Guttal, 2006, p. 27). More than any other actors, the opening of

the development space has led to a greater role for civil society in setting, negotiating, and implementing development priorities (Carbone and Lister, 2006, p. 7).

While definitions of civil society vary most theorists refer to a 'sphere' of political and social activity that is separate from the state and the market and to the actors that operate within this sphere (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 18; Kaldor, 2003; Scholte, 2002). Used in this way civil society encompasses a range of actors, including social movements, community organisations, political parties, trade unions, though the term is increasingly being used to refer simply to NGOs, particularly in discussions of development (Amoore and Langley, 2004, p. 91). At the international, national, and local levels IFIs and bilateral aid donors are viewing civil society as a means of legitimising development programs by engaging civil society actors as partners (Edwards, 1999; Harrison, 2007; Henry *et al*, 2004; Hudson, 2001). This has been particularly evident since the World Bank introduced 'good governance' and fostering of 'social capital' as a major part of its funding conditions (Harriss, 2001/2004; McNeill, 2004) and since the adoption of a policy discourse that advocates 'participation' and 'empowerment' by IFIs and bilateral donors (Cornwall and Brock, 2006). Additionally, recent scholarship has focussed on the inclusion of religious actors within civil society their increasing visibility in development (Benedetti, 2006; Clarke, 2006).

3 'NEW SYNTHESIS' OR TOP-DOWN HEGEMONY?

Far from seeing this as the beginning of a more inclusive and participatory development agenda, critical scholarship has drawn attention to the complicity of civil society actors in reproducing the top-down development agenda. The aim of critical theory is to examine the existing order and question how that order has been formed, and then focus on the ways that the order may be transformed (Cox, 1981/1996, pp. 89-90). Cox made the distinction between problem solving theory and critical theory. Unlike problem solving theory which seeks to explain events using existing structures and actors, a critical approach does not take institutions or social and power relations as natural or given, rather critical theory seeks to explore their origins and assess whether they are in the process of changing (1981/1996, pp. 97-9). Critical approaches explore the potential for alternatives and encourage struggles to achieve such ends (Linklater, 1992, p. 79).

Critical approaches to development seek to deconstruct and examine the material and ideational power relations that underpin development orthodoxy, yet they also seek to reconstruct alternatives to that orthodoxy (Matthews, 2004, p. 373), and thus questions of inclusion and exclusion form an important element of critical approaches.

Critical analysts of the opening of the development space have concluded that far from signifying any substantial change in development thinking or practice, the 'new synthesis' demonstrates the hegemony of the international development establishment, particularly IFIs (Guttal, 2006; Girvan, 2006; Ocampo, 2002; Taylor, 2004). According to this perspective the opening of the development space to civil society provides limited opportunities and effectively coopts oppositional actors, particularly through working and funding partnerships between civil society actors and operational agencies. In short, IFIs and other donors fund civil society actors that will not challenge the programs being implemented, will not destabilise local society, and will legitimise the programs by agreeing to be local partners in a subordinate position (Huddock, 1999; Lewis, 2001). Thus it has been argued that the relationship between civil society and IFIs and other donors has shifted from an oppositional to a co-operative dynamic (Utting, 2006). This leaves actors attempting to challenge or change the development agenda marginalised in favour of actors supportive of the status quo.

Chandhoke argues that civil society actors favoured in development are well-established NGOs headed by experts and professionals from the North, or citizens of the South trained in the North, and although some of these NGOs may form partnerships with smaller community-based actors these relations are characterised by 'infinite dependence' (2003, p. 76). This leads her to question 'whose political agendas do these NGOs advance when they intervene in crucial areas of collective life?' (2003, p. 72) A range of empirical studies support Chandhoke's argument; including studies from Latin America (Grugel, 2000), Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe (Michael, 2004), Sri Lanka (Goonatilake, 2006), Bangladesh (Feldman, 2003), and East Timor (Brunnstrom, 2003). Furthermore it has been demonstrated that in certain locations where formalised NGOs did not already exist they have been created by governments in order to access international funding and fulfil IFI conditions (Obadare, 2005; Vasavakul, 2003).

Therefore while access to the development space may have increased for civil society the space is dominated by professional, formal, and compliant actors. Civil

society actors granted access to the development space must curb any radical or transformative inclinations to continue to receive access and funding. Restrictions are even more pronounced for civil society actors in the South as they compete with each other for grants and partnerships with Northern NGOs, IFIs, and bilateral donors. This does not necessarily mean that civil society actors granted access to the development space have had no influence or are less legitimate representatives than those excluded. Indeed, the opening of the development space is an improvement on decades of exclusion for virtually all civil society actors. However, the asymmetries of power apparent in the opening of the development space can curtail and control the level of influence of those granted access and limit the types of actors granted access in the first instance. In this process a potentially vast source of alternative ideas and practices is also lost.

In addressing the question of 'which civil society actors are granted access to the development space?' three broad types of civil society actors emerge from the critical literature. The first are formalised civil society organisations based in the North that have access to institutions where the development agenda is set and negotiated, particularly IFIs and United Nations agencies. They implement development priorities in the South, often in partnerships with local organisations, and their professional development expertise gives them disproportionate power over their Southern partners. The need to implement programs funded by IFIs and other international donors limits their transformative potential making them likely to reproduce the development agenda (Murphy, 2005). The second are formalised civil society organisations from the South that work in partnership with Northern organisations, IFIs, and often their own national governments. In order to be chosen to work in partnerships these organisations must relinquish their autonomy and ensure that their approach to development reflects that of their financiers and Northern partners. Despite being staffed by and often headed by nationals from the country in question, professional requirements mean that the staff are generally drawn from the social and political elite, limiting their understating of development needs of people from other class and ethnic groups, and ensuring they have an embedded interest in maintaining the broader status quo (Dasgupta and Beard, 2007; Mohan, 2002, p. 133; Townsend *et al*, 2002; Ulvila and Hossain, 2002). The third are local civil society actors that are more deeply involved in communities at the grassroots.

The types of civil society actors funded through IFIs and operational agencies are generally those more able to present themselves as more professionalised which potentially marginalises smaller and less professionalised actors. Some of these actors may have a deeper understanding of local development needs, though this is not necessarily a given. As distinct from the second type of actors above, they have limited access to the development space and to funds and partnerships whether international or national (Amoore and Langley, 2004, p. 99). This third type of actor includes formalised NGOs and philanthropic groups, but also more informal social movements, community groups, networks of activists, and collectives. In much of the literature these actors are perceived as having a better understanding of development needs, have more sustainable solutions to development problems, and are able to utilise knowledge that is otherwise marginalised by Northern expertise. Though still relatively powerless against the top-down, professionalised, development establishment (White, 1996) they are perceived to provide the best hope for alternative development approaches. It should be noted that this perception has also been accused of reifying and romanticising the grassroots, glossing over inequalities and homogenising communities (Agrawal and Sivaramakrishnan, 2001, p. 12).

While both the critical approach to the opening of the development space and the differentiation between types of civil society actors are welcome, the critical approach stops short of fully engaging with religious actors. While there has been a surge of literature on the role of religion in development over the last decade, critical scholars have contributed little to these discussions. We begin to address this shortcoming by examining the role of religious actors in negotiating, setting, and most crucially contesting the development agenda.

4 FAITH AND ETHICS AGENDA AT THE WORLD BANK

As the study of world politics grapples with the question of secularism and its alternatives (Berger, 1999; Casanova, 1994; Esposito and Watson, 2000; Fox and Sandler, 2006; Hurd, 2008; Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Thomas, 2005) there is an increasing awareness that religious actors are prominent in vast numbers of communities in the South. As a World Bank working paper recently acknowledged, 'religion is a central part of the international system…even if it wished to do so, the Bank could not

entirely sidestep the faith engagement' (World Bank, 2006, p.3). An emerging body of literature is concerned with the relationships between religion and development (Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Eade, 2002; Harcourt, 2003; Marshall and Keough, 2005; Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007; Thomas 2004). This section considers the role of religious actors in the opening of the development space. The question 'who sets the development agenda?' needs to be extended via two additional questions: 'what role do religious actors play in setting the development agenda?' and 'which religious actors are included and which are excluded?'

As noted above, IFIs such as the World Bank play a central role in setting the international development agenda. A critical reading of the faiths and development program of the World Bank provides an insight into the place of religion in this process. There are least three external and three internal factors that helped reposition the World Bank on the question of religion. These elements emerged in the same context as the opening of the development space in the 1980s and 1990s. First, highly effective NGO advocacy against World Bank environmental policy in the mid-1980s included religious advocacy groups which instigated the direct engagement with religious actors (Pallas, 2005, p. 678). In addition, a coalition of advocacy groups on environmental issues called the *Alliance for Religion and Conservation* (ARC) emerged in the mid-1980s and was formalised as an NGO in 1995 (Palmer and Finlay, 2003, p. xv). In 1997 the ARC network facilitated the first high-level linkages between the World Bank and religious leaders (ARC, 2008). Secondly, religious advocacy on debt in the South via the *Jubilee 2000* campaign influenced the policy priorities of in-coming World Bank President James Wolfensohn on the issue of highly indebted countries (Marshall and Keough, 2004, p. 44; Valley, 1990). Faith-based advocacy on debt relief and human rights subsequently became mainstreamed in influential policy networks, notably in the UK and the US, and has continued to be a prominent part of the international development agenda (Busby, 2007; Clarke, 2007). Thirdly, policy developments on religion in other international organisations such as the United Nations, Inter-American Development Bank, World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation influenced the World Bank's approach (Peccoud, 2004; Thomas, 2005, pp. 225-226; World Bank, 2006, p. 6). The Bank has documented a raft of other linkages between religious actors

and development institutions (Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007; Marshall and Keough, 2005; Marshall and Keough, 2004; Marshall and Marsh, 2003; Belshaw *et al*., 2001).

There are also three internal processes important for understanding the increasing interest in religion within the World Bank. First, an informal staff forum called the Friday Morning Group explicitly linked religion to a 'values' discussion at the Bank, and contributed to the institution's move beyond a structural adjustment ethos (Beckmann *et al.*, 1991). David Beckmann, who helped found the group in 1981, warned the institution in 1983 that 'the Bank's activities have become markedly less focused on reducing poverty' (Kapur *et al.*, 1997, p. 349; Thomas, 2005, pp. 225-226). Secondly, World Bank President Wolfensohn (1995-2005) was personally determined to bring religion into the Bank's operations (Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007, pp. 5-8) despite the Executive Board voting in 2001 to reject Wolfensohn's proposal to establish a small 'Directorate on Faith' by 24 votes to zero (Wolfensohn, 2004, pp. 21-22; Tyndale, 2003, p. 25; see also Clarke, 2007).[4] The program survived as a specialised unit within the External Affairs Vice-Presidency to be funded by the discretionary President's Contingency Fund and the Development Dialogue for Values and Ethics was established to operationalise World Bank partnerships with religious actors (World Bank, 2006). Thirdly, the survey *Voices of the Poor*, commissioned to inform the *World Development Report 2000-2001*, revealed that among the sixty thousand poor women and men surveyed, 'churches and mosques, as well as sacred trees, rivers, and mountains' were highly valued among the poor who were also aware of the detrimental effects of actions by religious actors on the development of their communities (Narayan, 2001, pp. 45-46). The priority to engage 'religion' was thus embedded within the Bank's own knowledge expertise.

The external and internal factors above describe ways in which religion entered the policy discourse, networks and institutional framework of perhaps the most influential actor involved in setting the international development agenda. Added to these are broader imperatives demanded by the attacks of September 11, 2001 in New

[4] Various explanations of this vote have been offered. Wolfensohn situates the problem with state stakeholders at the WB: 'national governments do not give homes to faith-based organisations typically in their own administrative set-ups, and they're just not prepared to let us do it.' (Wolfensohn, 2004, pp. 21-22); Tyndale (2003, p. 25) posits a 'link between religious groups and political conflicts in many parts of world'; Clarke (2007) suggests 'concern about the erosion of church-state boundaries in the USA and its potential spill-over into US policy on international development'.

York and Washington. The World Bank example demonstrates the ways that religious actors are included in the process of negotiating and setting the development agenda. The following section frames this process of inclusion against some important exclusionary dynamics.

5 EXCLUDING RELIGION FROM ABOVE

As previously discussed, critical approaches to the role of civil society in development discuss three broad types of civil society actors as a way of identifying asymmetrical relations of power. When applied to religious actors involved in development this approach reveals important differences in the status of religious actors and the potential for exclusion from the development space of particular types of religious actors. We illustrate this by classifying religious actors associated with the World Bank using the typology of civil society actors constructed above. Groups have been selected because they meet one of three criteria: they have entered into formal partnerships with the World Bank, have been involved in specific dialogues with the World Bank on development issues, or have been identified as prospective development partners by the World Bank. The differentiation of these actors according to the critical development typology is demonstrated in Table 1.

[insert Table 1 here]

Table 1 is not designed to critique the relative contributions of listed organisations, but to indicate the relative position and type of religious actors in relation to the World Bank. This highlights three characteristics of the World Bank's faith and development agenda. The first is a priority toward formalised organisations. This is to be expected given that the institutional requirements of the World Bank favour partnerships of formal activities and reporting and that the requirements binding the World Bank's ideology for faith and development partnerships lies in a benchmarking activity measured by the Millennium Development Goals (Marshall and Marsh, 2003). The second is that engagements with religious actors categorised above as informal are more problematic for the Bank. For example, the Guatemalan Inter-religious Dialogue on Development (DIRGD) revealed a 'glaring lack of documentation, understanding and use of the rich store of knowledge, work and ideas of faith institutions in development realms' (Marshall and Keough, 2004, p. 88). The Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development

Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) was, in turn, hindered by an inability to engage constructively with the economic framework of the World Bank's poverty reduction strategy and its lack of formalised membership resulted in a lack of 'clear strategic direction' (Marshall and Keough, 2004, p. 92). Thirdly, the mechanism used to include informal faith-based programs in the World Bank program was the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). Though described as an 'independent NGO' the WFDD was from its inception dependent upon directives from the Development Dialogue team at the World Bank. Despite its commitment to deep engagements with religious communities, the WFDD experienced difficulties 'especially over how WFDD is perceived by faith communities critical of the World Bank, IMF…and G7/8' (Taylor *et al.*, 2003, p. 2). In 2005 it was placed 'in hibernation awaiting decisions by its trustees and partners (notably the World Bank)' (World Bank, 2006, p. 1, fn.1). Yet significantly, from its own inception the Development Dialogue was virtually ignored at the executive levels of the World Bank (World Bank, 2006, pp. 1,4) and its eventual inclusion in the Human Development Anchor is described as philosophically and instrumentally unsuccessful (World Bank, 2006, p. 4).

From this brief example we identify three factors that demonstrate the value of a critical reading of religion in the development space. The first is that formalised religious organisations seem to have a different capacity than informal religious groups and communities in relations with IFIs as they have access to the political spaces where the international development agenda is negotiated and set. This is not to suggest that such groups cannot challenge the development agenda. The peace-making record of the Community of Sant'Egidio and the advocacy potential of the newly formed WFDA are both examples of this. Yet of equal significance are the limitations that formality places on contesting dominant ideas and practices. This is particularly important for analysing religious actors in development because religio-cultural dynamics are more deeply rooted in communities than organisations (Thomas, 2004), suggesting a divergence between the types of actors included in the development space and the types of actors embedded in communities, especially in the South. Thus, from a World Bank perspective the informal engagements described in Table 1 are attributed with a lesser status as 'guideposts' when compared to partnerships with formal organisations which are considered as models (Marshall and Keough, 2004, p. 87). This may be due to the

embryonic nature of initiatives, but also because they constitute attempts by informal networks of religious actors embedded in communities to engage in grassroots transformative partnerships (see Tyndale, 2006).

Secondly, formal institutional organs designed to enrich faith and development partnerships at the grass-roots level *within and outside* the World Bank are themselves marginalised from centralised development processes. For instance the WFDD and the Development Dialogue on Ethics and Values have both struggled for legitimacy and funding. If central bodies such as these are ineffective, it is more than reasonable to suggest a large number of informal religious actors operating at the local level in the South remain completely excluded from the so-called rise of religion in development at the international level. In this sense the World Bank is an arena of contestation where religious development priorities can be coopted and marginalised.

Thirdly the dynamics of including and excluding religious actors homogenises religion and coopts it into the knowledge base of IFIs, further limiting the potential for development alternatives from religious actors. Clarke has usefully categorised FBOs into five types: apex bodies, charitable/development organisations, socio-political organisations, missionary organisations, and illegal or terrorist organisations (2008: 24-32). Combining Clarke's categories and our critical development typology, World Bank engagements with FBOs described above seem to homogenise religion around apex bodies and development organisations over socio-political organisations whose activities might fall outside the priorities of the development agenda. Yet it is also noteworthy that Clarke's FBO typology is based on degrees of formality, and informal development activities grounded in religious communities remain excluded from the analysis. The inclusion of religious actors in the development space requires an accommodation of both socio-political advocacy groups and informal associations and networks.

These factors illustrate the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion toward religious civil society actors by IFIs and within international development more broadly. The exclusion of informal religious actors embedded in communities in the South, in turn, excludes many of the possibilities of transformative change and development alternatives. Thus only a limited number of voices emerge from the religious 'sector' in development. A critical reading of religious actors differentiates between the types of actors included in the development space and those that are excluded and examines the

limitations on their ability to negotiate and set the development agenda. We also begin to see the asymmetries of power between IFIs and religious actors, between different types of religious actors, and even within IFIs. Yet it is here that the critical approach to religious actors in development tends to stop short. For critical research aimed at altering asymmetrical relations of power within the development agenda, the challenge exists to broaden analysis of civil society actors to include organisational *and* community-based dynamics of religion within its own critique. Beyond the boundaries of the development agenda, the possibility of religion as a deep resource for contesting development orthodoxy and providing alternatives is poorly conceptualised and often ignored.

6 EXCLUDING RELIGION FROM BELOW

Whilst the critical view highlights the exclusion of informal religious actors from above, critical approaches operate with a limited view of religion from below. This undermines critiques of inclusion and exclusion of religious actors in the development space.[5] This excludes two important dynamics of religion in development. First, critical approaches overlook the role of religion in the material contestations of development. The importance of materialist concerns in the critical tradition is matched by a suspicion of the transcendent ideologies of religion that are seen to undermine the immanent and situated needs of the poor. We challenge oppositional binaries between material/secular and spiritual/religious concerns, and argue that it is misleading to conclude that the materialist ontology of the critical traditional is incompatible with religious agency (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p. 170).

A prime example of critical development ideology and practice by religious actors is the liberation theology movements that flourished in Central and South America between the 1960s and 1990s. Not unlike critical approaches more generally, liberation theologies have passed through forms of 'leftist fundamentalism' toward 'a more complex reading' of power and development (Miguez, 2006, p. 125). Liberation theology is rooted in a praxis-based epistemology (Bennett, 2007). It is grounded in theological and political advocacy for the poor (Boff and Boff, 1987, pp. 1-10; Bonino, 1975) and in Freire's ideology of conscientization (Berryman, 1987, pp. 34-38). It also incorporates both materialist and indigenous re-readings of religious tradition (Belo,

[5] Additionally this limitation could be extended to critical considerations of exclusion from below in civil society more generally, though this is beyond the scope of this article.

1981; Brown, 1984; Miguez, 2006, pp. 122-125; Miranda, 1974). Liberation theologies construct frameworks for action where immanent (liberationist) and transcendent (salvationist) ideals are employed to advocate for those who are 'are totally outside the system' and who suffer the 'idolatry of the market', 'exclusion' and commodification (Miguez, 2006, p. 129).

In his seminal work, *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez set the cause of liberation for 'oppressed peoples and social classes' by critiquing developmentalist (*desarrollista*) orthodoxy and infusing religious elements into alternative development conceptions (1973, pp. 21-42). For Gutierrez, it was within a 'radical perspective of liberation' – grounded in the situated faiths and communities of the poor – that development 'finds its true meaning and possibilities of accomplishing something worthwhile' (1973, p. 36). Such peoples are overwhelmingly religious in outlook, and this impacts directly on how development is perceived. In the contemporary context similar movements have been identified in Korea (Suh, 1991), Malawi (Mitchell, 2002), Senegal (Galvan, 2004), Cambodia (Poethig, 2002) and Thailand (Darlington, 1998) to name a small sample. They represent important expressions of a critical re-reading of culture by religious actors and a core dimension of the 'global struggle for authenticity' in development emanating from the South (Thomas, 2000, p.818; Haynes, 1994, pp. 18-43).

The second issue excluded by critical approaches is the potential for counter-hegemonic agency by religious traditions. The recent inclusion of religion in setting the development agenda can be read as an expression of the hegemony of Northern interests (Clarke, 2008, pp. 18-21). Indeed, aspects of the critical reading of the World Bank's faiths and development agenda above encourage such an observation. Yet we argue that this is not a sufficient point upon which to rest. Religious traditions are best understood as ambivalent (Appleby, 2000, pp. 288-301; Haynes, 2007, pp. 53-74). In practice this means that religious actors offer both limitations to alternative development ideas and practices but also the potential to articulate and gain support for such alternatives. Critical approaches must understand this to more fully account for counter-hegemonic activity taking place in the South. Further research needs to be directed towards actors excluded from the development agenda and their agency needs to be re-evaluated. There are numerous examples of this ranging from the role of religious actors in anti-dam

movements in Brazil (Rothman and Oliver, 2002), opposition to mining in the Philippines (Holden and Jacobsen, 2007), and promoting neglected aspects of development such as health (Farmer, 2005), water and other basic needs (Patterson, 2007), which can explicitly or implicitly critique dominant development priorities and practices.

Religion and religious actors are embedded in social and political worlds in the South that make them difficult to 'see' and measure using conventional analysis of formalised organisations. However, given the importance of religious agency it is imperative that critical theorists not exclude religion from counter-hegemonic praxis. Studies of religious actors in counter-hegemonic movements tend to escape this dilemma by name swapping. For example, religious groups become 'community groups', 'grassroots organisations', or part of 'social movements' when they challenge the hegemony of the development agenda whereas they remain 'religious' when they are associated with dominant ideas and practices. We argue for a new categorisation of religious actors. Agency, whether hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, cannot clearly be attributed to either sacral or secular structures, ideas, or worldviews. At the local level the secular and sacral are mutually constitutive (Asad, 2003, pp. 21-66; Marty, 2003).

Rather than simply adding religion to the critical secular frameworks of the past, new research initiatives that take religion seriously need to be resituated within a secular-sacral conception of the spaces of development, and founded in an ambivalent notion of religion. Unless this can be achieved, critical approaches to development will continue to exclude core elements of religion that, in turn, will undermine its ability to critique the development agenda and the cooption of civil society. It is a particular challenge for critical scholars from the North who are susceptible to 'speak about Third World societies in terms…that, as it were, socially homogenised the poverty of those societies' (Kitching, 2001, p. 302). By contrast, Nandy's perspective usefully differentiates religion as 'ideology' and religion as 'faith'. Religion as ideology takes the form of a 'sub-national, national or cross-national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socioeconomic, interests' (Nandy, 2002, pp. 61-62). This is contrasted by, and in conflict with, the concept of faith as 'religion as a way of life, a tradition which is definitely non-monolithic and operationally plural' (Nandy, 2002, p. 62). For Nandy, in differentiating the 'two axis on

which…contemporary religions can be plotted' the state 'always prefers to deal with religious ideologies rather than with faiths' (2002, pp. 63-4). We suggest the same with regards to IFIs and the cooption of formal religious actors into the development agenda.

7 CONCLUSION

We have introduced the issues above with the intention of provoking further critical inquiry into the role of religion in negotiating, setting, and contesting the development agenda. Critical approaches to the opening of the development space, and particularly the role of civil society, are helpful in identifying the asymmetries of power between IFIs and civil society actors and within civil society itself. The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the development space are crucial for analysing the hegemony of the international development agenda and the potential for counter-hegemonic agency. We argue that these relations are thoughtfully and effectively articulated in critical approaches toward civil society in development. However, we suggest that the critical approach has not been extended to religious actors despite their influence in communities in the South. By drawing on the exclusion of religious actors from above and from below we have argued that religious actors are subject to a limited engagement that overlooks their role in reproducing hegemonic relations and holding counter-hegemonic potential in the development space to generate alternatives. Understanding the mutually constitutive relationship between secular and sacral elements of the social world will, in turn, enable critical theorists to differentiate the effects of religious civil society actors at the international and local levels.

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Table 1. Classifying religious actors linked to the World Bank within a critical development typology of civil society actors

Formal organisations in the North: Setting the Development Agenda	*Formal organisations in the South: Access to the Development Agenda*	*Informal actors in the South: Limited Access to the Development Agenda*
¤ World Vision ¤# World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) # World Council of Churches # Spirit of *Fes* Foundation # Women, Faith and Development Alliance (WFDA) * Delegates of World	# Community of Sant'Egidio * Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa * Sarvodaya Movement * Vikram Sarabhai Foundation	^ Guatemalan Inter-religious Dialogue on Development (DIRGD) ^ Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) ^ Interfaith health sector

Religions + Alliance for Religions and Conservation + Religions for Peace + World Parliament of Religions + United Religions Initiative, + 3iG Int'l Interfaith Investment Group + Pontifical Counsel on Justice and Peace	* Aga Khan Foundation + AVENA	dialogue (Tanzania)

Key
¤ Civil Society program partners
Partnerships established via the Development Dialogue on Ethics and Values
* Dialogue and research partners in development
+ Partnerships proposed by the World Bank working paper (2006)
^ Community development dialogues facilitated for the World Bank by the WFDD

Sources
World Bank Civil Society Program; World Bank Development Dialogue on Ethics and Values; Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007; World Bank, 2006; Marshall and Keough, 2004; Palmer and Finlay, 2003; Belshaw et al., 2001.