

**"Nothing is whiter than white in this world":
Child sponsorship and the geographies of charity**

Submitted by Frances Rabbitts to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography
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ABSTRACT

In light of a scant, fragmentary geographical literature attending specifically to charity and charitable giving (cf. Bryson et al, 2002), this research presents an in-depth exploration of one particular (and highly popular) 'charity' mechanism- child sponsorship –by way of delineating a more coherent set of geographical understandings and sensibilities towards the topic. Using research carried out in the UK between 2011 and 2012 with both child sponsorship charities and 'sponsors', and drawing together an array of theoretical and conceptual resources from within geography and beyond, I seek to engage particularly with the ways in which charity is organised, promoted and practised; the spatial, relational ways in which charitable action is configured and performed, and the flows of ethical concern, embodied praxis and power which co-constitute it. As such, and mobilising 'relational' geographical work on networks and assemblages, I present an alternative reading of 'charitable space' which allows for its dynamic complexities to be more fully appreciated.

Given my focus on child sponsorship, I set these interests within broader debates on the UK's Third Sector, international development and humanitarian aid, particularly debates regarding neoliberalism and (post)colonialism. As such, the research also contributes to an emerging literature on Global North 'development constituencies' and their mobilisation (Baillie Smith, 2008; see also Smith, 2004; Desforges, 2004), as well as to well-established geographical literatures on voluntarism. I also foreground a focus on the dynamics of 'faith-based' giving, since the empirical landscape of child sponsorship displays a distinct orientation towards Christian modes of charitable organisation and action, though in complex, often blurry ways. In all, the work seeks to critically appraise and (where appropriate) disturb common narratives and assumptions used to apprehend charity in both popular and academic discourse, and offer instead a more critically attuned set of understandings which re-imagine charity in more enlivened ways.

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LIST OF ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

Rabbitts, F. (2012) 'Child sponsorship, ordinary ethics and the geographies of charity'. *Geoforum*, **43**(5) 926–936.

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INTRODUCTION

In addition to the thesis, included in this volume are two journal papers and a book chapter, written alongside the research. Here, I briefly introduce and explain these inclusions.

The first paper, pertaining to giving ethics and the experiences of child sponsors, uses empirical material from my undergraduate dissertation (also on child sponsorship and charity). In light of a dearth of geographical research dealing specifically with long-standing, 'traditional' forms of charitable donation like child sponsorship, I aim through the paper to draw together some relevant geographical literatures (e.g. those on care and 'ordinary ethics' (see Barnett et al, 2005)) around the topic of charitable giving. I also seek to think through some particular themes regarding the geographies of giving praxis emergent through both my undergraduate research and the initial months of my doctoral research. As such, the paper argues for a more nuanced geographical sensibility towards giving which recognises its deep intertwining with everyday spatialities, relational fabrics and landscapes of identity. It contributes to relevant literatures empirically, by applying various strands of geographical theory to a study of giving practices; and by pointing both conceptually and theoretically to useful ways in which charity might be (re-)thought and approached within geography.

The second paper uses empirical material from this doctoral research to challenge prevailing ways in which charity *organisations* are conceived of and thought by scholars. Focusing on two [very different] child sponsorship charities, and mobilising the relational approach to space which figures particularly in the latter part of this thesis, the paper challenges scholarly tendencies to treat such organisations as singular, homogeneous entities that are somehow detached from social context. I aim through the paper to contribute to the small geographical literature on international development NGO work in the Global North, with development 'constituencies' (e.g. Baillie Smith, 2008; see also Smith, 2004; Desforges, 2004), emphasising ways in which NGOs dialogically intertwine with constituency socialities and politics, as well as with particular contexts which precede, sustain and frame organisational existence. As such, the paper also contributes to geographical work on Third Sector (and

international development) trends towards neoliberal modes of funding and governance, affirming the complexity and heterogeneity of neoliberal 'hegemony' by emphasising how NGOs are each uniquely, and dialogically, positioned according to these broader environments, manifesting their dynamics in surprisingly complex ways.

Finally, the book chapter revisits the topic of charitable giving, contributing to a forthcoming edited volume dealing specifically with child sponsorship, intended (as the first of its kind) to have both scholarly and professional appeal. The chapter uses empirical material and arguments from this doctoral study to critically assess several strands of thinking related to charitable giving (and specifically to sponsorship), disrupting ways in which it is usually thought and suggesting ways in which it might be thought otherwise. Through it, I argue against a functionally neoliberal reading of 'donors', and for a more complex, hopeful understanding which might undergird more inspiring, truly democratic approaches to development, redeeming development-focused 'charity' somewhat from its ethical doldrums.

Chapter 1: Approaching charity

1.1 Introducing charitable space

To the Apostle Paul, it was the greatest of all virtues; to Aristotle, it was 'not an easy matter'; to Nietzsche, it could be a 'gnawing worm'. Charity, it seems, has long been an enigma. Today, for many, it is a commonsense, everyday activity and attitude, a way of apprehending and practising one's moral place in the world, and a defining characteristic of UK (Big S/)society. And yet, charity has long been a contested, confusing topic, the focus of intense philosophical scrutiny for millennia and currently often under fire in popular, academic and professional realms, for a host of different reasons. Age-old, seemingly unanswerable questions still pervade these debates: is charity apolitical or deeply political, antithetical to justice or able to be productively intertwined with it? Is it a useful way of engaging with the world, or disturbingly harmful? Is it even really about giving (its usual public synonymy), or is it about receiving (paradoxically, also a common notion)? How do its 'ancient' philosophical debates connect into its 'modern' social, cultural and political landscapes; its national and international trends with its micro-dynamics within hearts, minds and souls?

Despite the importance, expanse and interest of this topic, little geographical research exists which directly appraises 'charity' in a sustained way (see Bryson et al, 2002). It is often present within empirical remits, theoretical concerns and scholarly attitudes, but as a topic of geographical enquiry is usually broached either indirectly or secondarily, preventing its fuller, richer theorisation and implicitly denying its importance within UK society and culture. This research strives to face charity head-on, to produce a geographically attuned reading that appreciates its intricate socio-spatial formulations. By exploring certain aspects of 'charitable space' in depth, and by drawing together many fragmented literatures of relevance to charitable action and organisation, I hope to produce a more coherent, critical set of geographical understandings and sensibilities to the topic, of intrinsic value and of worth to existing geographical work on such 'pro-social' activities as volunteering, ethical consumption and environmental conservation.

Empirically, this immediately presents some problems, since charity is a 'loose and baggy monster' (Bryson et al, 2002) which is almost impossible to pin down (especially since 'charitable' attitudes and actions clearly far exceed the spaces and activities of 'charities' as organisational forms). Seeking to provide an all-encompassing study would therefore be both unwise and impossible. Instead, I select to offer a critical analysis of several facets of one particular charitable mechanism, child sponsorship, in order to develop some in-depth insights about the intricacies of charitable space (I draw on empirical work done in the UK between 2011 and 2012). Though intensely specific, these insights offer a useful platform from which to suggest a revitalised geographical approach to charity, which takes seriously the complexities of its ethical, political and spatial fabrics.

Child sponsorship is an enduringly popular mechanism for charitable giving, focused on an enduringly popular stream of charitable mission-international development charity. It is based on the concept of donors committing long-term to monthly charitable donations that are then used by a development 'NGO' (non-governmental organisation, or 'charity') to attempt to transform the life of a child in poverty. Along the way, sponsors may communicate with 'their child' by letter, send photographs and gifts, even visit, glimpsing the lives of recipients and the changes wrought by their gift. These schemes are promoted as offering people a unique chance to connect personally with their giving and witness tangible results.

Sponsorship programmes have proliferated particularly since the 1970s, and now largely conform to a 'North-South' geography of aid¹, with sponsors based in Western Europe, North America and Australia, and 'sponsored children'- recent estimates number these at 8 million (Buchanan, 2011)- located mostly in Africa, South and Central America, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe². These sponsorships are managed and directed by a broad spectrum

¹ Throughout I use 'Global North'/'Global South' terminology as an analytical short-hand, signalling the particular structural pattern to which contemporary child sponsorship schemes broadly conform and the imaginaries on which they often rely; rather than as a way of accurately, authentically apprehending global space or assuming its homogeneity.

² Though Eastern Europe is not so easily conflated with the 'Global South' and 'development' in its traditional emphases, child sponsorship schemes are nonetheless largely apprehended using 'development' categories and vocabularies. Thus, such conceptual terminology remains particularly salient analytically, though again as broad short-hand and with full appreciation of the ways in which child sponsorship spills beyond easy categorisations.

of development NGOs; currently, over 120 organisations offer some form of child sponsorship to the UK public³, ranging from large international aid agencies to tiny family- or church-run efforts. Whilst the development work of such NGOs has long been the subject of critical analysis within development geography, their Global North charitable ‘faces’ are only more recently receiving attention (e.g. Smith, 2004; Baillie Smith, 2008).

For the sake of analytical coherence and because of resource constraints (see 4.1), I have chosen to focus on the Northern spatialities of child sponsorship; that is, the ways in which its development projects are packaged and promoted to Global North audiences as charity, and the ways in which ‘sponsors’ take up and practise this form of giving. A secondary point of interest for me involves ‘faith’-based giving; in recognition of strong faith-related undulations in the landscape of child sponsorship (over half of the organisations mentioned above express some connection with Christianity, though this expression varies in its content and translation into praxis).

As a slightly alternative way of opening up this set of research interests and setting out some key issues and questions that this research will explore, the remainder of this chapter grounds the study in auto-ethnographic reflection. Section 1.2 critically appraises the concept of charity and key ways in which it has been approached and understood to date. Section 1.3 turns to the complex intersections between charity and faith (and related notions of belief, religion, spirituality, etc), fleshing out not only theological frames through which charity is legitimised and understood, but also important ways in which this nexus is practically performed, particularly in relation to notions of identity. Finally, section 1.4 draws the discussion together into three thematic strands: space, ethics and politics, around which research questions for the subsequent study are then organised. Before this, however, it is important to précis the auto-ethnographic work.

1.1.1 Introducing the auto-ethnographic work

My choice to use auto-ethnography as a method of reflection in this chapter forms an unashamed response to a specific set of positionings through which this thesis has partly emerged, and in recognition that my engagements

³ Personal research.

with child sponsorship have always been thoroughly routed through various axes of my own identity, including my age (the reflections offered begin in childhood and run through to my early twenties), my gender, my (middle) social class, my whiteness/Britishness and my upbringing. Whilst these various dimensions are dwelt upon throughout subsequent chapters, I would like to use this chapter to reflect particularly upon my Christianity, paying critical attention to the various ways in which my experiences of sponsorship have been realised through a [particular] faith framing. This is therefore emphatically *not* a case of setting my writing in context by inserting some nice, self-congratulatory stories which amount to little more than navel-gazing (see England, 1994; Kapoor, 2004). This is about demonstrating that before I even think about writing, I am already implicated in the research process, able to interpret my experiences in particular ways that include and give voice to some others but not 'other others' (Ahmed, 2002). Sponsorship has already acquired a particular set of meanings, resonating with me in specific ways.

To this end, and following similar admissions from other geographers (e.g. Gold, 2002; Slater, 2004; Cloke, 2004) it bears acknowledgement that I was brought up attending (and still attend) an evangelical, Pentecostal Baptist church, and from an early age have been encouraged by family and friends alike to pray and develop a personal relationship with God. Through many years of learning, practising and experiencing, I can now trace a trajectory of my choosing to purposefully build my identity upwards from a foundation of Christian belief, letting it transform both myself and my relations with others. This has included not just investment in my knowledge of theology, but in my learning to live life in ways oriented towards the spiritual, deepening my knowledge of God and learning to expect to hear His voice and feel His direction in the everyday. This has always been in-formation, at once a goal and a pathway (unclear though it can often be) towards its realisation.

Without wishing to be conformed to stereotypes and assumptions that may easily be associated with this context, it is acknowledged here in order to frame and make sense of that which follows. Religious geographers are still under pressure to set aside, even erase this facet of their identity (Yorgason and della Dora, 2009); its very mention here in connection with my personal approach to research will undoubtedly still raise hackles. Christianity has a

seemingly unique propensity to do that (ibid). Yet, in order to fully recognise the implications and the value of my situatedness, this 'coming out' (so to speak) is vital. It is relevant both to the way I approach my work and to the topic of this research. I do not offer an all-encompassing reading of Christian approaches to charity, nor do I pretend that my personal narratives are necessarily indicative of those of others. It is a very specific reading, based within particular networks and narratives. This acknowledgement is not a guilty admission, as if it somehow detracts from my work, but an issue of critical self-examination and open, honest reflexivity. The ethical questions about myself which emerge from such a context are as important to consider as the ethical questions I have about those whom I am researching. If approached with due criticality, these considerations will hopefully transcend the usual parameters of positionality disclaimers and become a rich basis from which to develop a deeper understanding of the faith-charity relationship.

1.1.2 Beginning to reflect: "Please look after Niyifasha and keep her safe..."

One of my earliest memories is my mother teaching me how to pray. Each night before switching the lights out, she would kneel beside my bed and hear me fumble through our well-rehearsed sequence: first, thanking God for the day just past, second, saying sorry for my errors, and third, short requests for loved ones. Loved ones. My father. My sister. My friends. Niyifasha. Niyifasha was our family's 'sponsored child'. She is three years my senior and lives in Rwanda. Her Christian name is Jeannine, but since her sponsorship agency Tearfund followed the Rwandan custom of referring to family names prior to Christian names, we had always called her Niyifasha. Though of course I never signed my letters 'Rabbitts Frances'.

My connection with Niyifasha began when I was a toddler and my sister a baby, when my parents decided to sponsor a child. Attracted by the uniquely personal dimension of child sponsorship, their hope was that this would encourage their own children to take an interest in 'those less fortunate than ourselves'. To this end, they chose to sponsor someone of the same sex and a similar age to my sister and me. The sponsorship was registered in our names, and they committed to monthly payments of (then) £12. Thence ensued many years of comfort in knowing that our money was putting Niyifasha through

school and supplying her family with food parcels. In return, we conversed with her by letter, enjoying details of the new dress she had bought with her Christmas gift, or the extra bags of sugar she was able to purchase, or the new goat. Great, we were helping! Goodness only knows what sort of economic situation her family would be in without us (though I still don't know what her father does for a living. Or really much at all about how they live. Anyway, we were helping).

We sponsored Niyifasha for seventeen years. During this time, child sponsorship intersected with my life in many different ways; from my own personal sponsorship of a young boy in eastern Russia to participation in collective sponsorship efforts (e.g. youth group, church), from spending time over three summers in Uganda with a small sponsorship project in Kampala, to pursuing an undergraduate dissertation on the subject...that morphed into a paper...that morphed into a PhD. As these things can do. One way or another, it has enticed me in. It has grappled- is grappling -with some of the deepest parts of me and is providing me with a channel through which I can practice and establish various parts of my identity: as a Christian, a researcher, a giver, a recipient. As someone who cares...or wants to. I don't know where Niyifasha is now nor, to any degree of fullness, what sort of impacts sponsorship has had on her life. I have been shaped, however, by my involvement in and exposure to this form of charity, stemming back from those first few years of family efforts to reach outside ourselves.

The following section draws on these experiences, beginning to examine critically notions of charity and giving. Through this, I intend to tread lightly (for now) around the lists of pros and cons of child sponsorship that are often emphasised heavily in the press (New Internationalist, 1982; 1989; Siegle, 2008); these are revisited in later chapters. Instead I want to open up questions about how charity goes beyond pros and cons and simple categorisations. The snapshots of my experiences used here are intended in very partial ways to gesture towards this, demonstrating something of the conflicted emotions, imaginations, relations and spaces charity can involve. But more than this; they begin to bear witness to my own (in)stabilities, the depth of insight I may (or may not) have already acquired, and the ways in which I and this research have co-produced each other.

1.2 Thinking charity

In this section, I begin to subject some popular notions of charity to critical scrutiny, firstly considering common associations attached to ideas of 'charity' and 'giving', and then attending particularly to postcolonial academic criticism, arguing that both popular and academic critiques of international development charity may need to be fine-tuned.

In both academic literatures and popular culture, charity is commonly associated with not-for-profit, other-regarding acts (Picarda, 1995; Bryson et al, 2002), invoking notions of 'donation' (whether of finance, materials, time or energy), 'need' (co-determined by particular cultural values), and 'voluntary' action (usually in conjunction with some sort of organised effort). Charitable action is, as a result, commonly associated with both matters of conscience, and matters of duty, whether civic (see also Bornstein, 2009; Walzer, 1995) or religious (see also Bornstein and Redfield, 2008). Further to this, traditional methods of enticing charitable donations, such as leaflet drops, cold calling, and door-to-door or street collections, privilege notions of charity as formed from private, individual decisions and actions. In popular culture, high-profile annual fundraising events (such as Comic Relief or Children in Need) also tend to conceive of charitable giving as self-contained, private acts of generosity joining to support some broader 'cause', with their telethon-style counters and media coverage of creative individual fundraising efforts around the country (the same is also true of more recent e-donation mechanisms such as JustGive, GlobalGiving and, most recently, JustTextGiving).

Within these sorts of contexts, popular notions of charity often equate it to altruism (the notion of free or unconditional giving), whilst simultaneously (and somewhat paradoxically) recognising the potential feel-good feedbacks of charity for givers, in what Andreoni (1990) has termed the 'warm glow' of charity (see also Ribar and Wilhelm, 2002). Into these frames connect recent neoliberal trends in the fundraising practices of charity organisations, particularly towards consumer choice, enjoyment and gain (e.g. Richey and Ponte, 2006; Chouliaraki, 2010; Rutt, 2010), where the giver visibly receives something in return for their gift. This could mean a tangible object, such as a supermarket

item sold on the premise that a percentage of the price is donated to charity; or an experience, such as a sponsored cycle ride or a trek up Kilimanjaro.

Child sponsorship arguably fits neatly into these widespread apprehensions and trends. Predicated on individual sponsors supporting and engaging by letter with individual children, sponsorship seemingly epitomises notions of charity as private, individualistic, generous praxis in support of some larger cause (the redressing of 'poverty'). It also sits comfortably with recent consumption-oriented trends (though it has been around much longer), with schemes capitalising on the personal connection that sponsors receive as part of their gift. The one-to-one communication element of sponsorship is an important selling point for the schemes and largely responsible for their enduring popularity. It takes on further significance within Christian circles, where it is often associated (implicitly or otherwise) with the possibility of personal relationship with God (Bornstein, 2001). It is no wonder, then, that sponsorship charities consistently play on the perceived ingenuity and simple appeal of a direct debit that guarantees a 'friend for life' (The Giraffe Project, 2013).

The fact that sponsorship appears to hinge on its 'something-in-return' element connects clearly with sociological and philosophical work on the self-regarding dimensions of giving. Since the work of Marcel Mauss on the nature of the gift (1924), philosophical thought has tended to reject the conceivability of pure altruism (see also 3.2), emphasising instead the inseparability of giving from social obligation and expectation. Thus, whilst charitable donations (particularly in humanitarian schemes like sponsorship) can *appear* altruistic on the part of donors, in reality they are always imbued with expectations of return (Silk, 2004). The most visible, in the case of child sponsorship, is the promise of dialogue and relationship. Many NGOs practically endorse this self-orientation by discursively promoting sponsorship as a beneficial experience for sponsors, devoting whole sections of their websites and promotional resources to 'what you get' as a sponsor. It is easy to see why one of the main criticisms of sponsorship highlights its propensity to boost sponsor egos, 'wasting' money in the process (Buchanan, 2011). This is further embedded by academic critiques of the ways in which other-regarding action can become a vehicle for reinforcing desirable conceptions of the self, in what Allahyari has termed 'moral selving'

(2000). These critiques both showcase and reinforce a widespread cynicism, reacting against easy equations of charity to 'altruism' and 'generosity', and instead positioning charity as self-centred, about expecting a return on generosity in the form of a feel-good factor, or a better moral reputation.

In this schema, charity becomes a consumer good, with generosity being consumed through strategic, symbolic rituals of gratitude (Korf, 2007) such as, in sponsorship, the receipt of letters. Charity organisations appear largely as service providers, responsible for disseminating sponsor funds and relaying sponsor-child communication in as efficient and transparent a way as possible. I would, however, now like to contest the notion of charity as a linear, simple and bounded relationship, the idea that NGOs remain apolitically facilitative, and the suggestion that giving necessarily errs towards self-centred consumerism. In order to do this, two particular faces will be recalled. One belongs to Niyifasha, who you have already (and very indirectly) met. The other belongs to Artyom, a boy from Eastern Russia whom I began to sponsor when I was fifteen.

1.2.1 Niyifasha Jeannine

We began to sponsor Niyifasha in May 1993, when I was not yet four years old. For my part, the experiences that unfolded out of this settled into specific temporal rhythms. Firstly, it was the long-term tracing of our growing up together, looking a similar age in photographs (the latest photos of her were always on display in our kitchen, migrating between the dresser and the fridge over the years), having a dull awareness of her existence as a sort of Rwandan parallel to my own. Secondly, it was very solidly quarterly, marked by the arrival of her letters. These would arrive in long white envelopes addressed to my sister and me, and would contain a cover sheet thanking us for our support, a pink reply form for us to fill out, and her letter. The experience of reading her words there on the page, in her own handwriting, and of knowing that this sheet had been in her hands (I ignored the traces of other hands: her local church, translators, any number of Tearfund workers, delivery staff, postmen, etc. None of these mattered to me), used to briefly bring her closer to me. She would always colour in the pictures of Rwandan musical instruments that were printed in the letter margins. As a child I was more concerned about whether or not her colouring was inside the lines than what the pictures showed. I would then

move on to read her writing, often attempting to translate it by thinking of similar looking English words. It became a bit of a game. All I really ever ended up knowing about her was a vague, poorly pieced together soup of incomplete strands of information, gleaned from a mixture of our communication and my own imagination. But at least for those quarterly moments, she was more than a vague awareness. Thirdly, sponsorship became the habit of praying for her nightly. This, I confess, became rather more dully habitual than (in my mind) it perhaps should have. But it has formed part of my Christianity, my relating to God, my day-to-day faith-full doing and being. And it has forced me to dwell upon her humanity. Her letters always praised God for something, or told us of some church-related activity she had been involved in. Seeing her trying to live the same faith that I was trying to live somehow created an affinity- call it a sense of spiritual proximity -between us in my mind.

These rhythms halted in 2010 when her sponsorship came to an end. Niyifasha had graduated from high school and qualified to be a seamstress. When the opportunity came to write to her for a final time, my whole family sat down together and discussed what the letter should contain, what was important to say and how we could show as much love as possible in the space available. It was an emotional experience; more effort went into that letter than any of the rest. We had sponsored her for seventeen years; I had spent that time gradually making sense of her according to the central pillar of my own self, my upbringing and my own senses of normality- from childish responses to her colourings to comparing her life circumstances to my own. In this way, she became part of the wallpaper of my childhood, though I will never know what (if anything) I was to her.

1.2.2 Artyom

As I grew up, child sponsorship transcended the spaces of my home. My church (mainly through the coaxing of a few passionate individuals) began to collectively sponsor a boy in India named J Michael. His photograph was put up on the wall and his letters were read out in Sunday services, prompting supportive smiles and murmured prayers of thanks. Taking inspiration from this, my youth group later organised the sponsorship of a young girl from Sri Lanka called Genet (or 'Gennaaay' as one of our youth workers frequently called her in

his South London drawl). One or two members took on the responsibility of writing to her, and the rest of us passively registered her existence. My experience of sponsorship was not particular to my family any more, but beginning to stretch across and through other contexts. By the time I was fifteen, I decided to sponsor a child by myself. Through a little research into the world of sponsorship organisations, I turned to a small Christian charity that specifically targets Eastern Europe. I was assigned a young boy named Artyom, who was part of a project in eastern Russia. I remember being intensely excited by this new venture, knowing that my own money was going towards helping this orphan who would otherwise be out on the streets. Based on my prior experiences of sponsorship, a certain set of expectations were already forming within me about the transformation that Artyom's sponsorship would incur. I regularly received letters from the organisation informing me of his safety and progress, though I never received letters from Artyom himself. After about a year I was informed by the charity that he rarely visited their centre, and when he did he showed little interest in the activities on offer. Finally, after another year, I received a letter saying that the organisation had lost contact with him completely. I was offered other children to sponsor in the same project, but I refused and retreated for a while into confusion and sadness. I could not admit to 'knowing' Artyom in any tangible way. But how could he refuse what was being offered to him by the charity (and indirectly, me) and instead choose a life on the street? What had unfolded did not conform to my expectations- of my relationship with him or of his relation to the sponsorship scheme. The one Christmas card I had received from him, scrawled across with 'Dear Sponsey' in barely legible English, suddenly seemed meaningless, even carrying hints of betrayal and carelessness. Instead of gaining a 'friend for life', I felt I had lost a connection that had never really felt alive in the first place. In this, my desire for a particular type of relationship, one that would allow insight into his material and spiritual transformation (which I had expected to develop along certain lines), had not been fulfilled, leaving me questioning my own assumptions about the situation. What did sponsorship really mean to the organisation I had painstakingly chosen? I had assumed it meant rescue for Artyom, but the small print now tells me that my donation was always pooled across all the projects, not used specifically for his care. What, then, did sponsorship mean to Artyom? I found myself wondering more and more about his story, his politics and his

heart. The more I wondered, the more I realised I didn't know and questioned what I needed to know. What was this sense of relationship that was at once so superficial in certain moments of exposure, and yet so oddly real in others? For certain, it transcended the scant knowledge I had. And so I prayed for Artyom, entrusting his future to the certainties of God's loving care, and recognising the utter practical failure of my own.

1.2.3 Rethinking charity

These two faces have stuck fast in my mind. They provide a constant reminder to me that the doing of charity always exceeds the knowable and the foreseeable. They have both occupied spaces within my mind and heart of imagination, surprise and faithful hope, where self-orientated motivations intermingle with other-regarding drives. This has sometimes occurred smoothly, sometimes with friction; it has always exceeded the cognitive and never with much degree of predictability. Such are the intimate, intricate and often uncomfortable geographies of faith-full living. Without denying the practices and strategies through which donors can undoubtedly invest in themselves, here Allahyari's 'moral selving' and discourses of a consumerist turn in charity fundraising do not quite encapsulate the complexity of care and the going-beyond (Cloke, 2002) of giving. There seems to be a need to account for the ways in which charity can foster a committed, sensitive connection to the Other (Auge, 1988), as well as the complex, often fragmentary ways in which it can connect with subjectivity. Alongside this, there is an ongoing need to understand how charity becomes a vehicle through which moral assumptions about the world become reproduced and embedded.

Niyifasha and Artyom also serve as reminders that charity is not composed simply of individuals connecting to wider projects through autonomous, neoliberal acts of philanthropic choice. My experiences of sponsorship have infused my growing up. They formed part of my learning how to judge the relative merits of coloured-in pictures, how to communicate with God and how to be a part of my own family. They have become intertwined with key places within the realms of my own lived experience (Niyifasha, for instance, still belongs in my kitchen, on my fridge, or on the kitchen table in letter form. This is where she lives and breathes and talks). Whilst forming in

themselves a strange and surprising set of experiences, they are simultaneously caught up with everyday materialities and networks of the ordinary.

They have also been intensely relational experiences, investing in my own social and familial networks and becoming a vehicle for their delineation and performance. This was never just about my 'relationship' with Niyifasha or with Artyom. Others have always been co-present and caught up in my caring, making this equally about the relationality of my day-to-day existence. Moreover, less visible others hover over and weave through all of this, not least through organisational frameworks and structural devices. Written letters, for example, bear traces of the hands of administrators and delivery workers, the voices of translators and officials advising me (and Niyifasha, and Artyom) how to respond appropriately, and the beady eyes of those employed to filter out anything considered untoward about the communication. In their relative invisibility, it is all too easy to forget these touches, voices and gazes. But their undeniable presences within the sponsorship connection are as powerful as those of both sponsor and child, co-configuring the landscapes of charity.

NGOs, then, are more than seemingly neutral service providers. They are also active participants in shaping the sponsorship process. Many of these organisations also recognise that charity can move out beyond notions of individualistic, linear, bounded giving, and enfold various senses of community and belonging. For example, NGO Compassion has recently set up an online social networking site for its sponsors, and regularly produces promotional materials specifically targeting church congregations, Sunday Schools and youth clubs. Many NGOs also offer group sponsorship as an option, willingly administering these collective efforts in the recognition that sponsors do not necessarily exist, or cannot afford to exist, as solitary figures.

Charity therefore connects with both complex organisations and relational people who are situated deeply within particular social networks and fabrics. The ways in which these interact and overlap are neither simple nor stable, and involve as many disengagements and disconnections as they do connections, as charity becomes enfolded within individual lives and contexts in surprising ways. With this broadened idea of the instabilities and inner

messiness of charity in mind, I now turn to examine child sponsorship from the perspective of postcolonial critiques.

1.2.4 Into the heart of darkness: Niyifasha as exotic other

When my parents decided to start sponsoring, they chose a girl from Rwanda, because Rwanda was somewhere poor in the middle of Africa (somewhere bigger that was poor). Sponsorship was billed as a long-term, holistic and deeply personal way of giving. How could it be anything other than a good thing to provide someone with food and an education when otherwise they would go without? That was 1993. This set of logics was compounded in 1994, when the Rwandan genocide began. Like most people in the UK, we knew little more than what we had seen on the news. Updates from Niyifasha's sponsorship charity, Tearfund, reinforced our certainty about sponsorship; here was an appropriate way to do our bit to help a troubled nation. Apart from anything else, it was our Christian duty to love those that the world rejects. Like so many others, we held on to verses of Scripture like James 1:27:

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Sponsorship was an exercise both in serving God and in forcing ourselves to face uncomfortable truths about global inequality (and, in 1994, the depths to which humanity can sink). My interaction with sponsorship since has been accompanied by the constant sense (sometimes verbalised within our family, often just felt) that I am infinitely more fortunate than Niyifasha. By sheer luck of the draw, I am 'in here' (see Jones, 2000), with my political freedoms and material wealth and relative security. She, through no fault of her own, is 'over there', facing poverty and darkness and danger, although the actual nature of her existence is left largely to my imagination. I am the West and she is the Rest. I am wealth, she is poverty. I am blessing, she is misfortune. It is not *her* that is inferior (far from it, she is as beloved by God as I am), but her surroundings. Rwanda, to me, was both impoverished and dark- dark in an opaque, fearful way.

Just after turning seventeen, I visited Uganda for the first time. As part of a team of eleven, I spent time working with a small Christian child sponsorship

project in Kampala. I was filled with excitement at the sights, smells and sounds of the city; it was all so intoxicatingly exotic. Through the project's church base we spent time with the children, led activity days for them and visited their families. Though still in a woefully partial way, and with absolutely no personal sensibility towards the politics of Ugandan childhoods (e.g. see Cheney, 2007), through this the Other side of sponsorship became slightly more tangible to me. Bewildered and hopelessly green with regard to all things non-Western, I was suddenly a part of sponsorship's dissemination. It was immediately more tangible. Africa became less dark and more colourful, and I remember thinking that Rwanda couldn't be that bad after all. The distances between myself and Niyifasha seemed to shrink. However, binaries such as safe/dangerous and light/dark were only replaced with others: familiar/exotic, dull/exciting.

Reflecting back on these various experiences of sponsorship, I realise that they never expanded my horizons to any significant degree. I, and the parameters of my world, remained uninterrupted by sponsorship; occasionally hurt or confused, but never challenged and changed- only affirmed and congratulated. Despite her familiarity, Niyifasha only ever became familiar on my terms, and her distance and difference was constantly re-emphasised in ways which re-affirmed my existing perceptions about the world. Perhaps I could have hoped that openings such as our similar age, shared faith and personal correspondence might have laid a foundation for ethics of solidarity, or even a more self-disruptive encounter.

The sponsorship mechanism is thus composed of the intermingling of various distances and proximities, produced psychologically, discursively and imaginatively, as well as materially and practically. However, even these spatial ebbs and flows are, for the most part, produced by comparing Niyifasha's [ebbing, flowing] position with my own stable, central one. Achieving a more inspiring encounter does not, therefore, just mean challenging the way Niyifasha is performed and produced. It also means my own position, even my very self, being decentred and becoming radically vulnerable to disruption (see also chapter 3).

1.2.5 Exacting postcolonial criticism

Critical scrutiny, particularly that emanating from postcolonial critiques, bids me recognise that both my personal willingness and my capabilities to sponsor a child in poverty, to visit Uganda on a short-term development team and to fulfil the role of caring Christian giver, are enabled by and produced through certain contexts and sets of power relations. They and I bear particular witness to the many entanglements between British cultures of development charity and colonial pasts. The world-wide extension of child sponsorship schemes (see section 2.2.2) coincided with and was routed through the post-war production and dissemination of 'development' itself (see Cowen and Shenton, 1998; Power, 2003). As such, the schemes have from their inception intersected with and come to reinforce North => South geographies of aid and development, with sponsors located in the Global North giving to recipients located in the Global South. These philanthropic landscapes have become part of the material and discursive reproduction of global structures of imperialism, and continued assertions of Western superiority (Lambert and Lester, 2004). Critical analyses of child sponsorship, therefore, must account for its unavoidable positioning within these contexts.

Though these politico-historical geographies condition my own memories and experiences, they become obscured to me, such that I am never forced to question my own position within them. This is laboriously, and politically, achieved through the obscuration of many relational networks, material assemblages and 'other others' (Ahmed, 2002) that facilitate and shape the landscapes of my giving. Through practical, material and discursive techniques (Simon, 2003), global poverty and inequality come to appear as merely sad facts of life, devoid of origin and without need of explanation (Hattori, 2001; Chouliaraki, 2011). My position in the world is one of fortune (or blessing); giving to development-related causes becomes a question of morality but not of politics. Instead of being based on a radical de-centering of my own position, and an awareness of the relational complexities of interdependency, my attitude towards Niyifasha is broadly determined by my stereotypical assumptions about Africa and poverty. These are built on discursive imaginaries of difference, absence and lack (Raghuram et al, 2009), rendering me one more benevolent Western do-gooder, stumbling around in the darkness of political naiveté. I am thence perfectly positioned to be romanced by the apparent simplicity of child

sponsorship and swayed emotionally by the faces of children in sponsorship adverts. I am care without concern for politics. Postcolonial criticism condemns my ignorance as both ethically and politically destructive, reproducing colonial power imbalances and silencing Other ways of speaking (in this case about poverty and global inequality).

Despite the pertinence of this position, however, it is important to disrupt the easy equation of international development charity with neo-colonial condescension, and pay more attention to its complexities and contradictions. Postcolonial theory's conception of power is often, and somewhat unjustly, read as a North-South see-saw perpetually tilted Northwards, despite postcolonial theorists consistently drawing on far more complex perspectives (e.g. Babha, 1994; Kapoor, 2004). Taking inspiration from Foucault, these draw attention to the subtle flowing of different types of power through multiple networks and relations, and through discourse. Such perspectives might entice interest in the intersections between child sponsorship and church leadership, the invocation of God as ultimate authority, or broader constellations of Christian discourse and culture; or in the intersections between the claims of NGO promotions, the micro-dynamics of organisational governance and the attempts of my parents to invest in their own offspring.

Beyond these more obvious power relationships, child sponsorship takes on a host of more subtle, embodied significances which (though no less powerful) critiques of global power inequalities often fail to fully elucidate. What, for instance, of the unconditionalities of love and the humility with which sponsorship might be performed: the thought put into letters, the unseen fond glances at photographs, the unheard prayers? What of senses of the spiritual or attentiveness to the prophetic (see Cloke, 2010)? What of critical capacities with which sponsors are endowed to recognise injustice and inequality and take steps, however small and seemingly insignificant, to undo them? Such are the creativities of generosity. Postcolonial theory provides considerable resources with which to explore these, yet often, and sadly, analyses stop short of doing so.

Critically deconstructing the seemingly apolitical, uninformed attitudes of compassionate sponsors, then, does not do justice to the full complexities of

charitable ethics. These are not defined simply by how much people (don't) know, as per the knowledge deficit models so condemned by 'care at a distance' theorists (e.g. Barnett and Land, 2007). Being ethical also has to do with the transcendent, the welcoming and empowering possibilities of love, the creativities of going-beyond-the-self (Cloke, 2002), and the intersection of these with relational nuances of distance and proximity in more elaborate ways than a simple reproduction of distance through discursive and material Othering (Said, 1978). Through child sponsorship flow paradoxical practices and attitudes that at once push sponsor and child apart, emphasising their differences, and bring them together, emphasising their similarities, resulting in messy, tangled tensions and negotiations. My experiences with Niyifasha and Artyom both testify to this. Thus, whilst the questions asked by postcolonial theory are indeed crucial, I intend to utilise their potential in collaboration with other theoretical and conceptual resources in order to more fully negotiate the creative nuances of charity.

1.3 Connecting charity with (my) Christianity

In light of my particular concern for the relationship between charity and faith, the significant Christian presences within the field of child sponsorship (see section 1.1) and my desire to reflect purposefully on my own faith identity, I now begin to explore the relationship between charity and Christianity, fleshing out some important ways in which its theological, socio-cultural and spiritual underpinnings have been thought and critiqued. I consider firstly how charity is apprehended within Christian theology, and secondly how important politico-historical critiques of Christian charity have developed with regard to landscapes of Western humanitarianism. Thirdly, I draw on my own experience to begin to complicate and disrupt common assumptions about faith and, fourthly, present some discussion regarding its complexities from which the subsequent study might begin.

1.3.1 Thinking charity theologically

“And now, these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” - Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV.

In Christian theology, charity has a very close relationship with love. The original Greek word translated in this verse as 'love' is the word 'caritas', from which the word 'charity' is derived. Caritas is thought of as the practical out-working of agape love, or the unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love that best mirrors the love of God for humankind. Both agape and caritas are "*God-ordained principles and God-given gifts which provide a key ethical framework for living in the world of the self and the world of the other*" (Cloke et al, 2005: 388). They therefore considerably exceed modern notions of charity as giving to the poor (Lewis, 1952).

Agape- and caritas-underpinned charity has been regarded as a key theological virtue particularly since the work of Thomas Aquinas (e.g. *Summa Theologica*), in both evangelical and orthodox denominations (Cloke et al, 2010). Whether viewed in terms of this broader relational love or in its narrower application as helping the needy, charity is seen as a key way to practise Christianity. Indeed, it is often argued that to adhere to the Christian faith and to not practise it thus is, quite plainly, to not adhere to the Christian faith at all (Hutter, 1997), since "*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*" (James 2:17, NIV). This understanding of charity as a theological virtue is therefore strongly connected into senses of faithful identity, being and belonging.

The subject of identity within human geography has been subject to radical critiques in the last twenty years, emanating particularly from psychoanalysis-informed feminist scholarship (e.g. see Butler, 1990; Rose, 1993; Valentine, 1993; also Pile and Thrift, 1995) and postmodernist challenges to essentialist, stable and autonomous conceptions of the self (e.g. Bauman, 1993). This work positions identity as multiple, relational, shifting and often contradictory. Within more recent scholarship on the geographies of religion, it has been recognised that religion frequently forms an important facet of personal identity, even in the apparently incongruous context of 'secular' modernity (Kong, 2001; Buttimer, 2006). Indeed, Yorgason and della Dora (2009: 632) argue that: "*There is something about the ways in which people adhere to, leave, or proselytize a religion that differs from characteristics of other axes of identity. Religion thus appears to many as something more like political ideology than gender: an identity chosen rather than given (despite*

scholarship's serious questioning of that binary)." In the context of Christianity, regardless of the extent to which it is ideologically applied (e.g. through evangelism), three key potentially transformative contexts of its theology and ethics can be sketched out with regards to identity, and thence to charity. These provide useful starting points from which to make sense of individual charitable responses, despite their specificities.

The first context is that of a transformed sense of self, and orientation towards others. There is a sense that Christianity bestows upon adherents a stable subjective meaning and purpose, rooted in eternal acceptance and love emanating from God. Life on earth becomes a journey of "[finding] out what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10, NIV) and "keeping in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25, NIV), whilst developing a virtuous character that strives to let theo-ethics suffuse every other facet of one's identity. Concomitantly, the self-other relationship is expanded to include God, promoting an offering up of oneself that can disrupt the patronising tendencies of giving (Korf, 2006). This relationship with otherness is also premised on a levelling of social hierarchies through adherence to ethics of unconditional love and welcome, to whatever extent this is intermingled with more difficult desires to convert others and see them changed.

The second context is that of transformed priorities and values, in line with Biblical visions for relationships and community. To many, Christianity may not be fundamentally valuable on a spiritual level but does provide an admirable moral system and anchor for personal ethical living and political action (Cloke, 2002; Sheringham, 2010). These ethics of Christian virtue include grace and humility, serving and loving others. Other ethics are encapsulated in key, oft-quoted passages of Scripture such as the 'fruits of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22-3). Thus, charity organisations (and donors) not expressly affiliated religiously can employ inspiration, logics and ethics either derived from or similar to those found within religions (Kong, 2010), just as faith-based organisations can enfold seemingly a-religious or 'secular' narratives (e.g. rights-based conceptions of social justice (Cloke et al, 2005)). The crossovers and overlaps here are complex, despite purposeful attempts to demarcate faith/secular boundaries and establish separate, often oppositional identities.

Finally, the third context is that of transformed praxis. As previously suggested, there is a distinct connection within Christianity between beliefs and actions, and an underlying expectancy that 'true' Christianity is Christianity-in-practice. This might be through private investments in a personal relationship with God, through prayer, Bible study or developing an awareness of the spiritual in the everyday (Brace et al, 2006; Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009). It might be through self-discipline and the cultivation of a Christian form of habitus through the micro-management of personal behaviour and emotions (Bailey et al., 2007). It is also done in-relation (Orsi, 2003), from seeking to love others practically and unconditionally, to looking for ways to demarcate the saving power of God through embodied practices of distinctive living, talking and being.

Despite the diverse, fluid, multiple ways in which these bases for transformation are practised and lived, their intersections with charity have in the last two centuries become associated with particular types of praxis and certain ethical baggage. I now turn to these critiques of 'Christian charity', thinking through the assumptions upon which they rely.

1.3.2 Faith and charity: critical intersections

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." - Jesus Christ, Matthew 28:19-20, NIV.

In the UK, with the zealous foundations of the 18th century revival of evangelicalism, throughout the 19th century developed deep Christian emphases on mission, including mission via philanthropy (Bailey et al., 2006), often predicated on verses such as the above. This intersected with a Victorian cultural emphasis on virtue and personal improvement and developed both in the colonies, where evangelism has been consistently associated with the 'civilising mission' of British empire (e.g. Manji and O'Coill, 2002; Sheikh, 2007; Brett, 2008), and on domestic fronts, where Christian voluntary organisations and movements were pivotal in achieving social justice successes like the abolition of slavery and the promotion of working class social welfare (Cloke et al, 2005). Today, it is widely recognised that the landscapes of 20th century Western humanitarianism owe considerable debts to these histories, and more generally to Christian theology and ethics (see also 2.5.2).

The intimate connections and complicities drawn between Western Christianity, humanitarianism and empire understandably form a popular (though not always stable) base for politico-ethical critiques of contemporary development-focused charity (particularly its faith-based manifestations). Indeed, certain negative politico-ethical associations now hang from the concept of 'Christian charity' in both popular and academic discourse. These associations invariably include accusations of condescension, cultural imperialism and problematic desires to convert, which (though able to be easily traced through Western humanitarianism more broadly) are often aimed with particular force at 'evangelical' forms of faith-based charity, reinforcing long-standing associations between Christianity, charity and colonial conquest. I now attend more critically to this nexus.

Firstly, neither the Christian faith nor its intersections with charity can be condemned off-hand as simply reproductive of colonial power relations (e.g. Samson, 2002). Christianity has not always aligned neatly with the politics of colonial administrations and imperial cultures, for instance, and has often been taken up in ways which radically challenge hegemonic structures of domination (Brett, 2008). Moreover, spatial and temporal variations in its adoption and application have led to the emergence of vastly different faith-inflected approaches to humanitarianism (Thaut, 2009), and a variety of blendings of faith with political world-views (Cloke et al, 2005). This complexity contrasts conceptions of Christianity as monolithic and overbearing, suggesting that space is needed for its more productive, liberating elements. Whilst the interrelationships between Christianity and charity are often portrayed as neo-colonial, in reality they do not conform so easily to this picture. This realisation sits neatly within a broader array of questions currently being asked by both scholars and development professionals, about the nature of faith itself and how exactly it influences aid and development schemes (e.g. Rakodi, 2007; Flanigan, 2008; Bradley, 2009; Thaut, 2009).

Following this, it is also crucial to re-cast faith as a multiple, complex phenomenon. For instance, the simple equation of Christianity to proselytism deserves considerable disruption, since a large proportion of Christian charity work explicitly distances itself from evangelicalism, depending on factors such as theological tradition and the cultural acceptability of proselytising (Thaut,

2009). It also bears pointing out that evangelism is perpetually treated in overly simplistic ways which gloss over its complex ethical infusions and the diverse ways in which evangelistic desires are both experienced and performatively translated into praxis. Blanketing evangelistic efforts as the epitome of the unethical may gloss over important inner complexities and instabilities, as well as the critical agency of those 'being evangelised' to engage with and synthesise what they hear with their own perspectives, often with creative, culturally relevant and (surprisingly) ethical results (see also Russell, 2004). This is not to deny the ethical problems that often accompany proselytism (e.g. Cloke et al, 2005), but to highlight the complexities of the Christian faith and its application which get swept aside when such arguments are foregrounded in isolation.

In a similar vein, it is important to problematise the ways in which 'Christianity' is produced by being demarcated from, and opposed to, the 'secular' (Gokanskel, 2009), and highlight ways in which this separation is contested and disrupted, revealing blurriness, multiplicity and instability. Questions are also prompted about how the politics of 'post-Christendom' (Cloke et al, 2010), and modern and postmodern transformations in the landscapes of Western religious praxis, map onto landscapes of charitable action, drawing into the frame recent discussions of postsecularity which further blur the parameters of 'faith' and 'the secular'.

More broadly, individual and corporate adoptions, practices and experiences of any faith vary hugely with context and personal interpretation. Furthermore, the intensities and stabilities of faith as a form of meaning-making are nonetheless multiple and unstable (Ivakhiv, 2006), rather than being essential or intrinsic, being performatively produced through social and embodied practice and discourse. I now offer some more auto-ethnographic discussion, exploring how these complexities and provisionality have grounded unanticipated transformations to my own (researcher) identity.

1.3.3 The excesses of Christianity

In 2010 I had the opportunity to attend a large Christian conference in Somerset, aimed at students and those in their 20s. There were about 7,000 people camping on site, attending a vast array of seminars and workshops,

worship meetings and social functions, all based around equipping them to live Christian lives. Each morning and evening, everyone met together in an especially large tent for collective worship, prayer and teaching. Before these meetings started, as people filed in and found a place to sit, four large plasma screens above the stage were rotating around a number of adverts. These ranged from funnies and boredom relievers to plugs for seminars, to notices about what to do in the event of torrential rain. One evening, as my slightly early arrival prompted me to sit and peruse these adverts, one in particular caught my attention. Actually, it did more than catch my attention; it brought me to tears. It was a short film made by Compassion, a high profile Christian child sponsorship agency. It consisted of four adults (each from a different area of the Global South), all previously sponsored, sharing testimonials of how the dual influences of sponsorship and Christianity had utterly changed their lives. They came across as noble, humble and gracious survivors of childhood poverty, violence and abuse, and many other experiences that (as the film no doubt aimed to argue) no child should have to encounter. It was powerfully produced, each narrative cementing its authority as the speakers witnessed to the power and potential of child sponsorship (and through it, the saving power of Jesus Christ). They were each the picture of fulfilment and empowerment; materially, emotionally, spiritually. They had started to become who God intended them to be.

As I sat there watching the film, I became enthralled and found emotion welling up within me. Suddenly I was choking back tears. The geographer inside me was busy critiquing the evocative techniques with which the film was extracting just such a response from people. Moreover, the atmosphere of the conference would of course be having some effect, being like in energy to secular music festivals or large gigs. Nevertheless, I was moved and, for a moment, convicted by the power not simply of child sponsorship, nor of Christianity, but of their *combination* (see also Hefferan and Fogarty, 2010). It was a commanding message about the great potential of each gift, but also the potential of the saving power of God's love. My response was an automatic, affective experience that included but also transcended emotion. I can only describe it as a 'bubbling up' of my faith. For that moment it was suddenly difficult to see child sponsorship as anything other than a deeply spiritual

process, in all its dimensions and spatialities. Just as with Artyom, my expectations of sponsorship were built around the transformative potential of this combination of the spiritual with the material. As such, my Christian self-identity, priorities and values immediately connected in with this portrayal of the positive potentials of faith in action, freeing and empowering rather than humiliating and patronising. Having just spent three years as a Geography undergraduate, honing my skills of (un)healthy criticism for just such a moment as this, I was surprised by my own response. I spent the rest of the meeting feeling slightly indignant that my critical ability had apparently been trumped by my emotions and my faith, not thinking about how they all might fit together.

1.3.4 Re-thinking faith

Whilst my faith has, for the most part, provided a useful backdrop to my experiences of sponsorship, furnishing me with helpful rationales and shaping my feelings and actions, it has often remained as just that: a backdrop. An explanation, a motivation, but not at the forefront of my experiences. And then, occasional moments such as that described above witness faith 'bubbling up' to the surface and taking a more central, sensuous role. At these times, it is easier to realise just how inseparable it is from both my emotional experiences and my cognitive expectations of charity. In the example above, emotions such as compassion and caritas are drawn together with belief structures concerning God's attitude to the poor and my duty in response. An awareness of God's presence is united with Biblical notions of the right and the good, and embedded in contexts of knowledge and realms of practical experience. In addition to this, my faith never stands still; its welling up in response to the film contrasts more mundane, back-seat positions that it occupies in more everyday spaces and times. Even within these realms of the 'normal' and familiar, my faith is occasionally prompted to 'bubble up', whether through interaction with another person, through prayer or any other of the myriad ways in which one can perceive the voice of God. The everyday is recoded as sacred (Holloway, 2003).

In short, a holistic engagement with any faith necessitates engaging with all of its complex, fluid dimensions. Christianity is, more often than not, excessively more than a belief system that one simply adheres to, with varying

levels of success. It also works through encounters, affective registers and relationships (with God and others). It holds intense meaning, though this shifts and changes as it comes into contact with the different landscapes of individual lives (Kong, 2010). Through its unstable signification (Ivakhiv, 2006), my faith intersects with both the person I am and the person I desire to become, through the embodied pursuit of Christian virtue (see 3.2.3; 3.5.2) and out of a primary orientation towards God and love, and a belief that God is both deeply personal and relational.

This faith-full being and becoming is inseparable from wider discursive and relational contexts. At the conference, I was surrounded by a buzzing, youthful 'affective atmosphere' (Anderson, 2009) of belief and saturated with the latest projections of Christianity, in a context that promoted a deep conviction about its relevance to our lives and culture. The socio-cultural structures within which the Bible and the spiritual are interpreted and applied cannot be escaped, at those sorts of events or anywhere else. Engaging with the Christian faith means engaging with its tangible and ghostly presences, its public and private manifestations, and its fragmentations, inconsistencies and gaps. It also means critically exploring the complex, dynamic relationship between belief and action.

It therefore makes for quite a challenge to easily pin down and demarcate faith, religion and spirituality. They are excessive in almost every way, over-spilling cognitive categories and definitions. Though my own experience is just one amongst many, it testifies to the ways in which faith entangles the emotional, the affective and the transcendent with the rational, the tangible and the discursively quantifiable. It inhabits a web of different spaces and networks, moving through and beyond the individual and blurring unstably with the 'secular'. It is also inevitably full of tension, as the heterogeneities and porosities of faith contradict efforts of the faithful to demarcate group boundaries and emphasise a unified, distinctive identity (Holloway, 2003). These recognitions of complexity are more than just academic pedantry. They are central to the rest of this thesis. Designing to explore the relationship between faith and child sponsorship suddenly acquires new layers of complexity, calling for more flexible conceptualisations of faith (see also sections 2.5 and 3.5) which take into account the ways in which belief systems are stabilised, cemented and held onto without compromise, and yet

destabilised as they come into contact with the changeabilities of time, place and individual lives.

1.4 Moving forward: three key themes

Approaching child sponsorship through the lens of personal narrative not only allows a context to be sketched for what follows, but also allows easy assumptions and simple definitions to be disrupted, opening up space for deeper, more complex questions to be asked. Throughout the remainder of this project, therefore, whilst the focus of the discussion shifts between various components of charitable space, I continue to remain open to my own experiences and feelings as worthy of inclusion and reflection in the research process (see also 4.6).

More broadly, to underpin what follows I would like to group together my intentions for this project into three thematic strands, out of which research questions are derived to frame the subsequent study. Whilst these themes overlap and blend together considerably, they are dealt with separately here for ease of discussion. The first I have grouped under the heading 'space', the second under 'ethics' and the third, 'politics'. Within each, I introduce key questions and interests; and allow each to frame and undergird a different perspective on the relationship between faith and charity. Thus, I seek to interweave this latter nexus with my other concerns rather than artificially treating it as somehow separate. Through this, and in acknowledgement of its complexity and porosity, I intend to avoid an approach which confines faith to the 'instrumental, narrow and normative' strands of questioning with which it is commonly apprehended by much academic scholarship (Jones and Petersen, 2011). Instead, I seek to remain open to the multitude of possible presences, absences and significances through which faith and charity might permeate and co-constitute each other. Empirically, my interest in comparing different forms and manifestations of faith-based charity forms a central (though not singular) guiding influence for the study, framing and directing my research choices (see also 4.3).

Theme 1: Space

It is becoming clear that engaging with both charity and faith necessitates moving beyond those spaces and spatialities with which they are normally associated. The sponsor-child relationship, for instance, is far from linear, actually involving many others (and other others) in multiple, fluid webs of relations. It moves out of the individualist vacuum often associated with charity to infuse a whole host of other spaces, particularly those of the everyday. From the home to churches and schools, charity is deeply embedded in and tied to local contexts, contributing to the production of place and investing in existing structures of social relations. It works through and helps (re)produce networks of ethical action and spiritual investment; it is widely recognised that church networks, for instance, are vital sources of social capital (e.g. Thomas, 2004; Connell, 2005; Lunn, 2009) that invest in their members as much as in the causes for which they labour. It is vital to understandings of charity that the geographies of these networks are interrogated and the implications of their politics fully recognised. Moreover, faith-based charity can be expected to further exceed easy categories and spatial conceptualisations because of the overspilling tendencies of faith. How do faith-based spatial imaginaries change the way that charity is thought and done? How does faith modify the nature of charitable spaces and relationships? What role the spiritual, or at least its recognition within structures of philanthropic practice?

Understanding charity geographically, then, means challenging simplistic conceptualisations and finding ways to attend anew to its spatial complexities. It means employing a more subtle, relational notion of power that recognises its different flows, modes and patterns weaving through bodies (individual and collective), practices and everyday spaces. Attention is also drawn to the nuances of distance and proximity, and to the practices, performances and embodiments that co-produce senses of charitable space and scale. On what kinds of geographic imaginaries, and attitudes to distance and difference, does child sponsorship rely? How does its structure of caring at a distance relate to the familiarity offered through the sponsor-child 'relationship' (furthermore, to what extent and with what implications is this relationship being commoditised?); and what happens when ethical or emotional proximities or imaginaries of equity (e.g. God's ubiquitous love for humanity) meet with distances co-constituted through such axes as race, age, culture, geographic

location and economic situation? Moreover, does faith promote a distinctive set of geographic imaginaries or attitudes to distance? How do particular doctrinal traditions and faith cultures (dis)associate notions of proximity and distance with notions of sameness and otherness? Are faith-inflected imaginaries able to be separated out from ostensibly 'secular' perspectives, or do they blend seamlessly, whether within officially 'faith-based' charitable action and organisation or within broader sector cultures? Thus, what sorts of spatial complexity arise when faith-based approaches meet other systems for defining and understanding difference?

Theme 2: Ethics

It is also crucial to consider the ethical frameworks and imaginaries which infuse charitable space, whether these issue 'top-down' through sponsorship promotions and broader humanitarian discourses, or from the interrelation of these with so-called 'ordinary ethics' and everyday caring concerns (Barnett et al, 2005). Charitable ethics cannot be reduced to a vacuum in which self and other interact alone, unhampered by (and unproductive of) other relations. Such a conception privileges vastly reduced notions of power and responsibility. The sponsorship relation between sponsor and child must therefore be contextualised through a consideration of the social and ethical situatedness of charity. Furthermore, engaging with the ethical potentials and problems of faith-based charity will necessarily involve engaging with the ordinary ethics and relational messiness with which this is enmeshed and infused.

This also means engaging with the virtuous visions of character desired for the self that are very often tied up with charitable giving. Such visions may subtly infuse philanthropy not in wholly selfish ways, but with types of conscious self-orientation that have their own ethical potential, prompting questions about exactly how contemporary development critiques and normative visions for postcolonial 'dialogue' and 'democracy' understand and envisage the role of the [caring/ignorant/condescending] Northern Self. Important here, for instance, might be Aristotelian notions of virtue, which heavily emphasise the links between character and action (see also 3.2.3), as well as recent geographical work on the nexus between faith-based motivations, discourse and praxis (e.g.

Cloke, 2010). Questions might be asked about the propensity of Christianity to frame visions for virtuous living and ethical interaction (including in ways which might be considered unique or distinctive), underpinning and shaping performances of charitable care, as well as about the other ethical frameworks and ontological perspectives which will also undoubtedly be present in giving. Likewise, it is important to interrogate how faith-inflected charitable ethics are brought into both theoretical and practical being, and how they overlap and interweave with apparently 'secular' motivations and approaches. This touches on the relevance of Biblical 'theo-ethics' (Cloke, 2010) and interrelations between Christian mission, Scriptural endorsements of charity and British cultures of philanthropy, though with due expectation that their contemporary manifestations might vary enormously. It also centralises the interconnections between faith and praxis, which have only begun to be explored within geography more recently, and prompts questions about what particular resources geographers might bring to this task (e.g. Brace et al, 2006; 2011).

Theme 3: Politics

At first glance, charity in any form seems to be a bit of a political minefield. Its fundamentally unequal predication on gift relationships (as well as the particular politico-historical trajectories associated with development-based charity) suffers from continual allegations of colonialism, cultural and religious proselytism, and patronising, apolitical condescension. But, within and through this, there also seems to dwell significant political potential; whether in the nascent possibility of mobilising everyday social networks to projects of collective civic action and cross-boundary dialogue, or in the difficulty of cynically sweeping aside the compassion and love of donors without first recognising that such motivations are not inherently unethical, but may be channelled productively. It might be asked, then, what sorts of political dynamics, relations and imaginaries infuse and become propounded through charitable space? Are these as neo-colonial as many popular critiques of charity would have us believe, or might they enable schemes like child sponsorship to move out beyond the constrictions of both the colonial and, increasingly, the neoliberal?

It might be asked, then, what sorts of political action, thinking and feeling are fore-grounded by faith-based approaches to charity? Furthermore, what sorts of political dynamics and interactions characterise the fabrics of faith-based charitable space, whether in terms of organisation or donation? To what extent do these fabrics enfold post-secular forms of faith that seek to move beyond the confines of modernistic religion? What relevance might notions of post-secular charity have for debates and questions surrounding charity and (post)coloniality?

Taking forward the more nuanced, Foucauldian notion of power discussed previously, it can be recognised that whilst the potency of North-South power imbalances do deserve considerable attention, the power flows involved in charity exceed this. They stretch into communities, families and individuals, and infuse a variety of moral projects of being and becoming. As such, considerations of the politics of the charitable gift relation (in this case, the relationship between sponsor and child), must necessarily also consider the politics of all the other structures, networks and power relations in which this relation is embedded. Hence, judgements concerning the political potential of any kind of charitable activity must involve an engagement with the individual and collective 'everyday-ness' of charity.

The above themes can be condensed into several research questions. These frame and guide the subsequent research, and are used in chapter 8 to structure a concluding discussion:

1. What kinds of spaces and relations, dynamics of distance and proximity, co-constitute child sponsorship?
2. How might charitable space be (re-)theorised to account for these complexities, and how does this impact understandings of charitable care 'at a distance'?
3. What kinds of ethical relations, resources and imaginaries co-constitute giving practices and performances, and how do these co-configure the ethical dynamics of the gift relation?
4. Is it possible to distinguish ethics unique to faith-based giving, separable from other ethical prompts and resources?

5. What kinds of political dynamics co-configure child sponsorship, whether regarding its key component parts (e.g. IDNGOs, sponsorship schemes, sponsors/sponsor communities) or broader sector trends in governance (e.g. neoliberal)?
6. How is charitable space produced through the delineation of certain imaginaries of responsibility, belonging and global space, including and excluding certain voices and narratives in the process, *and* how do these get critically negotiated/contested? Thus, what potential does child sponsorship have to found politically inspiring approaches to global inequity and injustice?

Chapter 2: The organisational spaces of charity

2.1 Introduction

I begin reviewing existing literatures surrounding charity by examining prevailing ways in which charity *organisations* have been understood to date, and asking critically if/how these might contribute to a nuanced geographical reading of charitable space. Analytically, my focus on child sponsorship centralises a variety of organisational forms and spaces. Child sponsorship is currently offered to the UK public by over 120 charities⁴, forming part of a wider umbrella group of over 7000 British-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs)⁵ working in international development. This categorisation does not centralise one organisational form, incorporating NGOs with diverse roles, funding sources and degrees of formal structure. Neither does it illuminate the many ways in which the categorisation ‘non-governmental’ might be blurred (see section 2.3). However, despite this variation, for analytical ease I mostly use the acronym IDNGO (International Development NGO) in subsequent discussion, without presuming about organisational form, starting from the development focus of the vast majority of sponsorship schemes⁶ and their total reliance on public donations rather than government support.

I also seek throughout to remain open about the spaces which such diverse organisations enrol into their charitable endeavours in the Global North, from permanent staff offices to transient fund-raising events, and the longer-term cultivation of supportive spaces within homes, churches, workplaces and schools. These spaces might also exceed such place-based socialities, formulating through encounters with donors (e.g. over the telephone, online, via letter or email, or through promotional material) and through interactions between donors and devices like child sponsorship, where charity staff are less

⁴ Personal online research.

⁵ 7,431 records. CAF ‘Charity Trends’ website search facility (unhelpfully simplistic but nevertheless useful for broad indicators), search return filtered by mission descriptors ‘Overseas Aid/Famine Relief’ AND ‘The Prevention and Relief of Poverty’. Search filtered only by the former descriptor returns 10,044 records (10/09/13).

⁶ A few sponsorship schemes focus on groups/areas of the world not stereotypically part of ‘international development’ efforts (e.g. Eastern Europe), though such lines are in practice impossible to draw neatly, and all the schemes centralise the development of needy children. Nevertheless, the vast majority of sponsorship schemes and organisations retain some sort of international development focus and rhetoric, legitimising a broad analytical association between child sponsorship and ‘development’, with due acknowledgement of the blurry edges and dynamics also present here.

visibly present. Thus, and without trying to be comprehensive, the organisational spaces of charity clearly involve multiple spaces being drawn on and worked through simultaneously.

Academic literatures on IDNGOs' Northern spatialities emerge from several different disciplines and topical arenas, suggesting that IDNGOs develop according to multiple co-constitutive environments and political contexts. Firstly relevant is work surrounding the politico-ethics of development and the potential contribution of IDNGOs and their Northern 'constituency' work (Baillie Smith, 2008) to unequal global power relations. Thus, section 2.2 discusses both critical development studies work and postcolonial theorisations which understand IDNGOs in critical relation to colonial politics. Secondly, and relevant to the cross-sector position of IDNGOs within both international development and the UK's 'Third Sector', there is the extensive scholarly interest in trends towards the neoliberalisation of these landscapes. Section 2.3 examines the situation of IDNGOs regarding these dual trends, with particular respect for the various negotiations they are prompting regarding funding and governance.

Thirdly, a smaller literature exists concerning the internal dynamics of IDNGO management, providing insights into the 'black box' of IDNGOs as organisations; section 2.4 explores these insights and how they intersect with sector-wide pressures and dynamics. Finally, section 2.5 appraises the implication of faith within IDNGO spaces, particularly reviewing the recent surge of development studies work on faith-based IDNGOs. Utilising arguments from chapter 1 about the contingency of religion, faith and spirituality, I foreground a concern for the diverse ways in which faith might be mobilised, not only through incorporation into organisational structure, discourse and policy, but also through less easily traceable presences in individual praxis. Section 2.6 draws the discussion together and introduces literature on relational space as an empirical starting point from which to overcome the gaps and weaknesses present in prevailing narratives of IDNGOs.

2.2 Charity and Postcoloniality

Contemporary Western relations with ‘the Rest’ of the world in all their myriad forms are framed unavoidably by colonial geo-histories (Crush, 1995; Pieterse and Parekh, 1995; Gilbert and Tiffin, 2008). This section explores how IDNGOs have been critically approached through recourse to colonialism and its contemporary spatial articulations, drawing particularly on interdisciplinary engagements with postcolonial theory. This is then related to the particularities of child sponsorship. Subsequently, ways in which colonial positionings might be reproduced and negotiated through the organisational spaces of IDNGOs are critically explored. Firstly, however, a brief historiography is presented tracing connections between charity, development and colonialism and examining how these are perceived to be present in contemporary IDNGOs.

2.2.1 Positioning international development charity historically

The contemporary interrelation of international development with notions of charity is often traced back to the Victorian popularisation of philanthropy in Britain and the colonies. ‘Victorian do-gooderism’ (Wright, 2002), as it is often disparagingly dismissed, emerged in the wake of famous campaigns (such as for the abolition of slavery), new waves of moral and religious fervour (e.g. the 18th century Wesleyan revival) and the work of iconic individuals such as Barnardo, Rowntree and Booth. It is associated particularly with interrelating political concerns for social reform, the societal consequences of industrialisation, liberal notions of freedom and progress (Aspengren, 2009). These combined co-productively with growing senses of overseas responsibility, demarcating a seemingly more ‘progressive’ side to colonialism that sought to improve the lives of the colonised.

The geographies of Otherness employed in this philanthropic turn were, it is often argued, irreducible to the ‘civilising mission’ of colonialism, interrelating with domestic rhetoric concerning the ‘uncivilised’ working classes (Daunton, 2008). Likewise, Manji and O’Coill (2002) suggest that in both Britain and the colonies, charitable activity formed a tool of ideological class control. Thus, a complex, moralised geography of charity emerged from an interlocking array of racial, cultural, religious, class-based and gender-based superiorities (Lambert and Lester, 2004).

From the late 19th century, this context is positioned as framing the emergence of hundreds of charitable NGOs (e.g. Bryson et al, 2002) seeking to address physical and societal issues on both domestic and foreign fronts; as well as the post-WWII notion of ‘intentional’ development (Cowen and Shenton, 1995)- the ‘will to improve’ (Li, 2007). These entanglements of international development with colonialism are therefore considered an important framing and legitimising context for the emergence of contemporary IDNGOs. Centrally, it is argued that they have fundamentally helped to position *charity* as a key mode of North-South relation (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004), embedding colonial attitudes of paternalistic improvement and depoliticising encounters, rather than prompting more responsible reflections on inequity and injustice (Sogge, 2002; Trundle, 2012).

In their overlapping material, imaginary and symbolic dimensions, contemporary IDNGOs are frequently positioned as *re-embedding* these colonial power relations. Materially, charity’s apparent redistribution of wealth more equitably is tempered by arguments that these flows follow long-established colonial contours, positioning “*Northern actors as carers who are active and generous, and...Southern actors as cared for, passive and grateful*” (Silk, 2004: 230). Whether flows of money, resources or dialogue, these spatial articulations appear to demarcate deficient non-Western others in need of care (Korf, 2007); similar tropes are noted in the UK government’s development and foreign policy (e.g. Power, 2009; Noxolo, 2012). Whilst these geographies are complicated by the rise of the so-called ‘non-DAC’ donors (e.g. India and China, see Six, 2009; Mawdsley, 2012), flows of international development and foreign aid still course strongly from the West to the Rest (Simon, 2003; Korf, 2007; Benessaiah, 2011), bolstering critiques such as dependency theory and, more recently, postcolonial analyses. These provoke disruptive questions about articulations of expertise, definitions of wealth and progress, and the imaginary geographies on which aid flows thrive (e.g. Said, 1978; Spivak, 1985; Bhabha, 1994; Raghuram and Madge, 2006; McEwan, 2009). Consequently, they read well-meant charity as, paradoxically, impoverishing the Global South.

These geographies are also notably entrenched discursively, through the mass media and IDNGO promotions. Such discourses include the imagining of development as ‘over there’ rather than ‘in here’, done to others by us (Jones,

2000), and popular summative imaginaries such as the ‘three worlds’ taxonomy (Ma, 1998). Another common thread is patronage (discussed subsequently) and notions of the parental responsibility of the West *for* others (Power, 2003; 2009), underpinned by Enlightenment teleologies of maturation. Additionally, contemporary mass media discourses are notorious for consistently positioning the Global South as deficient, whether in terms of poverty, disease, war, violence, corruption and political turmoil, or environmental problems (van der Gaag and Nash, 1987; VSO, 2002; Plewes and Stuart, 2006). Such associations legitimise charitable interventions, shaping both popular attitudes and the discursive frameworks within which IDNGOs must labour to glean support.

In sum, prevailing narratives regarding the nexus between charity, development and colonialism overwhelmingly insist that IDNGOs are complicit in the reproduction of colonial power relations, by virtue of inescapable material, symbolic and discursive flows. These allegations foreground specific politico-ethical debates and concerns regarding professional conduct, to which IDNGOs are often impelled to respond by external pressures and by internal prompts. Here, there seems to be space to undermine, resist and re-write colonial geographies, which are never straightforwardly hegemonic (Lambert and Lester, 2004). In response to narratives of colonial complicity, then, hope remains that “*all development is not just neo-colonialism in disguise*” (Curtin, 2005: 130) but instead includes complexities, non-conformities and resistances.

2.2.2 Positioning child sponsorship

Though the origins of child sponsorship are unclear, early forms of the schemes can be traced back at least to the 1930s and various already-existing strands of child-focused philanthropy and welfare concern (Watson, forthcoming). Debate continues regarding which IDNGO employed sponsorship first: Save the Children, as an effort to aid deprived children in Eastern Europe (Watson, *ibid*), or Plan, as a response to the plight of orphans of the Spanish civil war (Plan International, 2012); both are British efforts couched in terms of the ‘adoption’ or ‘fostering’ of distant needy children. Despite these blurry intra-European roots, early sponsorship models soon crystallised and spread elsewhere, becoming largely characterised by European and North American

schemes operating in 'Third World' countries. Sponsorship began to gather large-scale support from the 1970s in the aftermath of decolonisation, and remains a particularly popular way to donate to IDNGOs (Bornstein, 2001; Yuen, 2008).

Whilst framed, like other international development projects, by shared geo-histories of colonial philanthropy, child sponsorship is also vulnerable to its own distinctive implications within these landscapes. For instance, in the 1980s, socialist magazine the New Internationalist published a series of critiques, representing an important earlier example of debate not just around the practical content of sponsorship, but also around deeper reflections on its colonial politics. Wielding dependency theorisations, the articles criticise sponsorship schemes for perpetuating apolitical charity and relying on Western condescension (see Stalker, 1982; 1985; 1989; Shaw, 1989; see also Figure 2.1. Similar concerns still echo around the British news media, e.g. Siegle, 2008, Buchanan, 2011). They highlight how, centralising the long-term patronage of children, sponsorship schemes inevitably invoke the colonial symbolism of parenthood⁷.



Figure 2.1: New Internationalist cover, Issue 111, May 1982, parodying typical sponsorship promotions of the time.

The humanitarian incorporation of children from the Global South into emotive regimes of truth (in Foucauldian phrase) to motivate support, has well-

⁷ Two sponsorship schemes currently operate in ostensibly 'developed' nations (Save the Children in the USA, Barnardo's in the UK [pilot scheme]), subjecting sponsorship's traditional 'developmental' languages and spatialities to upheaval. Whilst these schemes were unable to be included in this study, they contain some intriguing negotiations as organisations seek to navigate sponsorship's stereotypically colonial associations in a Global North setting (cf. 'doing development here', Jones, 2000), as well as complex legal frameworks of child/data protection.

documented ethical difficulties (Smith, 2004; Manzo, 2008; Huxley, 2009). Feminist psychologist Erica Burman (1994) criticises the consumption of childhood as part of the international aid economy, particularly through recourse to Western conceptions of childhood which associate it with innocence, dependence and vulnerability. This, she argues, depoliticises and passivises children, abstracting them from context and reinforcing Western self-conceptions of agency, infantilising the Global South and legitimising external intervention.

Such tropes are frequently reinforced by images of solitary children (see Figure 2.1) which acquire a particularly powerful resonance when interconnected with appeals to individual responsibility, as with sponsorship (Yuen, 2008). Though it is inherently contradictory (Burman, 1994; Manzo, 2008), evoking a shared humanity whilst mobilising relations of patriarchy and dependence, nevertheless the 'lone child' image arguably forms a powerfully simple, recognisable brand logo for humanitarian principles (Manzo, 2008), joining an array of other linguistic symbols to "*construct, legitimate and represent hegemonic relations of domination between the colonizer and the colonized*" (Jarosz, 1992: 106). However, importantly, the consumption of such imagery by donors opens up space for alternative interpretations. Whilst this is further discussed in Chapter 3, Foucauldian-influenced postcolonial theory highlights how hegemonic discourses can be subverted through hybrid syntheses with individual contexts, strategies of solidarity, hybridisation and mimicry (Babha, 1994; Spivak, 1999).

Charitable discourses are therefore potentially complex and ambiguous, rather than simply reproducing colonial power structures. Similarly, the following section discusses how colonial legacies are read as being articulated through contemporary IDNGOs, affirming these narratives but also making space for others.

2.2.3 Appraising contemporary colonial articulations

Here I discuss two important ways in which colonial legacies are identified within the spaces of IDNGOs. Firstly, consider tensions which emerge in the field as different ideals, cultures and vocabularies clash together (Scott-Villiers, 2011; Williamson, 2011), through the structural deployment of projects

and through staff negotiations. These messy dilemmas feed back into development policy and strategy, dialogically shaping the Western spatialities of charity (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010). Thus, whilst this study is not principally concerned with how sponsorship schemes are disseminated in the Global South, they are important to acknowledge. They may lead, for instance, to devices being modified to sidestep associations with dependency or Western expertise; recent trends towards participatory development and community-led initiatives illustrate this (e.g. Cleaver, 1999; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Desai, 2002; Sanderson and Kindon, 2004; Williamson, 2011).

Secondly, the *discursive* spaces of IDNGOs have long been the subject of anti-colonial critiques, both academic and popular. As key sites of knowledge production about the Global South, development appeals are positioned as re-articulating centuries-old assumptions about the geographies of superiority/inferiority through teleologies of progress and constructions of the 'Third World' inversely to the West (Doty, 1996; Power, 2003), in what Said (1989) terms 'orientalism'. Postcolonial scholarship critiques the capacity of development discourses to embed power inequalities through practices of 'worlding' (Spivak, 1985) and speaking *for* the other (Kapoor, 2004). Such practices underscore charity as a defining mode of North-South relation, with very 'real' practical and material effects (de Certeau, 1984).

In the wake of 1984-5 Ethiopian famine and related events like LiveAid, a swathe of research within media, cultural and development studies launched a scathing critique of prevailing humanitarian fund-raising techniques (e.g. Pieterse, 1992; Dyck and Coldevin, 1992; Lidchi, 1999; Mayer, 2002; Clark, 2004; Andreasson, 2005; Campbell, 2007), particularly regarding their deployment of graphic images of suffering. Struver (2007) argues that in seeking charitable responses, these techniques structure encounters by spatialising misery, hardship and the power to save. More recent trends employing a reactionary positivism arguably reproduce similar landscapes of power (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008).

Whilst more complex, thought-provoking visual strategies are still rare (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008), the translation of these critiques into organisational codes of conduct (e.g. DOCHAS, 2006) demonstrates a move

towards greater institutional reflexivity. However, the translation from official codes of conduct into practice is complex, and cannot simply be read off official statements (Cloke et al, 2007). Moreover, producing the 'public faces of development' (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004) remains a complex, contradictory process, involving the negotiation of competing demands and strategies.

Whilst these narratives of colonial implication are important, they mirror the overwhelming scholarly focus either on IDNGO projects in the Global South, or on their Northern promotional discourses. As such, they tend to gloss over many other facets of IDNGO existence, within which colonial complicities might potentially be implicated, negotiated or reworked. For example, little emphasis is given to staff cultures, engagements with donors, or the upper tiers of IDNGO management and leadership. Also rarely acknowledged is organisational identity and ethos: though neither singular nor fixed, coherent senses of 'who we are' and 'what we do' are nonetheless produced and collectivised within IDNGOs, whether through official statements and policies, practices or particular individuals. Questions here surround their conjunction with certain spatial imaginaries, conceptions of poverty and philosophies of development, and how they then frame organisational policy, decision-making and relational encounters. I do not, therefore, want to constrict this study regarding the ways in which colonial legacies might frame and shape contemporary IDNGOs; rather, I wish to remain open to their many potential implications and disruptions, as well as how these interrelate and co-produce broader politico-ethical landscapes of international development.

2.2.4 Section conclusions

Existing literature on the spaces of contemporary IDNGOs overwhelmingly positions them as both colonial products and colonial perpetrators, entrenching associated power inequalities. Child sponsorship schemes seem vulnerable to these implications in both generic ways and on grounds distinctive to their own trajectories. These narratives are vitally important for developing a critical understanding of the politico-ethics of contemporary IDNGOs, prompting important questions about how these issues and relations work out within their Western charitable spaces.

This reading, however, deserves considerable complication. As previous discussion has intimated, the (dis)engagements which emerge in these respects are messy; the influences of colonial pasts remain blurry and elusive, and are subject to more complex dynamics than simply a lack of postcolonial knowledge or care from IDNGOs. For instance, vitally important are the politics of IDNGO fund-raising in Western contexts, the various pressures IDNGOs experience and the logics employed in their negotiation. Thus, the parameters, debates and issues raised by (post)coloniality interrelate with questions of funding, government policy and neoliberal governance, to which the following section turns. In sum, a central aim of this project will be to explore how the Northern spatialities of IDNGOs reproduce colonially-inflected iterations of global space, and yet also how this occurs with more complexity than previously assumed, challenging narratives of IDNGOs as simply co-productive of global inequalities, and creating space for a more hopeful politico-ethical narrative.

2.3 Charity and neoliberalism

IDNGOs operating in the UK form part of the 'Third Sector', a disparate array of organisations defined (albeit idealistically) by distinction from the state, for-profit organisations and the community (Seibel and Anheier, 1990; Jessop, 2002), and associated with self-governing, voluntary action for public benefit (Taylor, 1992; Fyfe, 2005). Since the 18th century, such organisations and conceptual categories have emerged as key modes of public ethical and political expression (inseparably from particular notions of civility and individual democratic action (see 2.2; 3.2)) (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). As such, important literatures regarding IDNGOs concern the politics of Third Sector governance and democratic potential, which are increasingly conceived of through debates about neoliberalism. Following an overview of the changing landscapes of Third Sector governance, this section appraises prevailing narratives about the relationship between IDNGOs and neoliberalism. Since the cultures of 'international development' reflect similar trends, the discussion emphasises multiple landscapes of neoliberal influence.

2.3.1 Defining neoliberalism

Firstly, however, some conceptual and theoretical qualifications are needed. The first is 'neoliberalism', which "*is in danger of becoming an over-used, almost redundant short-hand in much scholarly work*" (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011: 3). Peck and Tickell (2002) argue that neoliberalism consists of right-wing "*ideological software*" for competitive globalisation" (p380) developed in the 'heartlands' of North America and Western Europe, which packages free market capitalism and modernist technocracy into aggressive discourses of market extension, competition and state 'roll-back'. This ideological 'thought virus' (Beck, 2000: 122) has arguably become the commonsense order of contemporary Western politics (Larner, 2009), evolving to include 'roll-out' processes of active state-building and regulatory reform that pervade everyday life-practices (Peck and Tickell, 2002), positioning subjects as autonomous, self-governing 'citizen-consumers' (Bondi and Laurie, 2005). Rather than being a hegemonic, all-pervasive ideological regime, however, neoliberalism is recognised as being internally complex and contradictory, produced through contingent practices and institutional forms (Peck and Tickell, 2002). The geographies of 'actually existing neoliberalisms' (Larner, 2000) can therefore be expected to be multiple, fragmented and uneven.

The second qualification regards the term 'Third Sector' (similar terms include 'voluntary sector' and 'civil society') cf. the state, the market and wider society. Whilst this distinction undergirds the last two decades of UK welfare restructuring and concomitant discourses of active citizenship and social cohesion (Brown et al, 2000), in practice Third Sector activity lies within a '*triangular "tension field"*' between other sectors, inseparable from them (Fyfe, 2005; also Evers, 1995). As such, though 'Third Sector' is adopted here as the most all-encompassing term available, this is with recognition of its "*boundary problems, fuzziness and changeability*" (Brandsen et al, 2005: 750), explored subsequently.

Lastly, I employ the Foucauldian notion of governmentality so as to approach the dynamics of neoliberal regulation with a concern for technologies of power, their underlying political rationalities and discipline of bodies and subjectivities in 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1982). I refer to IDNGO managements of charitable space as methods of 'governing the contexts of charity', borrowing from Barnett et al's (2005) analysis of consumption

practices. This positions power as present not just in ideology or economic domination, but also in micro-technologies, practices and relations (Foucault, 1976; Driver, 1985) in fundamentally spatial ways (Elden and Crampton, 2007).

2.3.2 The changing relationship between the state and the Third Sector

A culture of voluntary and charitable activity is well-established in Britain, dating back at least to Victorian welfare concerns (Harrison, 1966; Himmelfarb, 1997; section 2.2.1). Of particular consequence for contemporary charity, however, are Third Sector transformations since the 1980s politico-economic embrace of neoliberalism. Extensive geographical literature documents how successive government mandates have 'rolled back' the welfare state, encouraging a pluralised social economy (e.g. Peck and Tickell 2002; Fyfe and Milligan 2003; Fyfe 2005; Bondi and Laurie, 2005), from Thatcher's devolution of responsibility to non-government sectors whilst ensuring continued state regulation (Williams et al, 2012) to New Labour's more complex adoption of inter-sector partnership (Fyfe, 2005). Most recently, Conservative visions of 'Big Society' seemingly promulgate "*a more invidious form of roll-back neoliberalism*" (Williams et al, 2012: 6), coupling further state retraction with a communitarian vision of societal responsibility.

These developments are well-documented in geographical literature on voluntarism, yet research concerning their impacts on IDNGOs is scant. Subsequent sections piece together various fragmentary narratives and assumptions regarding neoliberalism and IDNGOs, discussing broader implications of neoliberal trends and then specific questions of funding and governance, in relation to both the Third Sector and international development.

2.3.3 Neoliberalism and charity: critical implications

Three decades of neoliberal government agendas have fostered a proliferation of voluntary and charitable organisations in the UK in number and reach (Bryson et al, 2002), in tandem with a growing scarcity of resources available for their activity. The result, researchers argue, has been stiff competition and pressure on organisations to professionalise by adopting managerial approaches (Townsend et al, 2002; Bondi and Laurie, 2005; Fyfe, 2005), marketised devices (Brandsen et al, 2005; Desai and Kharas, 2010) and

corporatised branding strategies (Sargeant et al, 2007). Emergent are forms of charity governance previously correlated with for-profit organisations, blurring traditional distinctions and prompting internal tensions, public confusion and deeper questions concerning Third Sector emphases (Chew and Osborne, 2007; Chew, 2008).

Pressures to professionalise also emanate from state regulation, which deliberately synthesises Third Sector activity with neoliberal 'roll-out' frameworks. Charities are legally required to respond to legislation such as the Charities Acts (1992, 1993 and 2006) and under pressure to conform to codes of conduct (e.g. the 1998 New Labour Compact on the voluntary sector, see Fyfe, 2005). These frameworks privilege managerialism and service output, and are promoted and policed by the government's regulatory body for the Third Sector, the Charities Commission. All charities generating more than £5000 p.a. must register with the Commission, becoming subject to regular audits and penal action for failure to comply⁸.

Beyond regulatory frameworks, the recent state endorsement of 'Big Society' seemingly represents a strategic move to further frame 'civil society' with neoliberal values. Big Society is not, according to Barnett et al (2011), a mere rhetorical device, but a powerful ideological tool reframing landscapes of Third Sector funding and regulation with its emphasis on 'good governance' and individual voluntary action. Additionally, the ideological sentiments of Big Society are being reflected internationally in discourses of development (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011), particularly in their repackaging in terms of 'global civil society' (e.g. Anheier, 2007; Berry and Gabay, 2009; Baillie Smith and Jenkins, 2011). Like Big Society, global civil society rescales responsibility for the address of societal ills to community and individual levels, repackaging Britain's role in international development without departing from neoliberal agendas (Noxolo, 2012). Scholars argue that this leaves intact long-established inequalities, reflecting centuries-old trends of promulgating charity as the solution to the ills of free trade, rather than structural change (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; see also Manji and O'Coill, 2002). Indeed, its Western liberal

⁸ Interestingly, the Charities Commission is itself facing austerity measures (e.g. 33% budget cuts by 2014), resulting in streamlining moves and greater rhetorical focus on the self-governance of the voluntary sector (TSO, 2010; 2011).

framing has been described as neo-colonial, silencing alternative voices and narratives (Ager and Ager, 2011; Benessaïeh, 2011). However, Desforges (2004) argues that the influence of this rhetoric on IDNGOs is circumscribed by their bureaucratic structures, demonstrating that their position vis-a-vis political environments is always dialogic.

As well as influencing IDNGOs via regulatory frameworks and rhetorical frames, the UK government has also enabled and encouraged their very existence, particularly through the Department for International Development (DfID). The proliferation of Northern NGOs working in the Global South since the 1990s owes significantly to the 'rolling-back' of Global South state involvements in socio-economic activity, in which the UK government has frequently been complicit (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005; Munck, 2006). Since its 1997 establishment under New Labour, DfID has joined similar bodies from Europe and the US to support the world-wide 'rolling-out' of neoliberal agendas through development partnerships, aid deals and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) (Noxolo, 2006; Biccum, 2007), as well as the 'post-Washington Consensus' turn away from bilateral aid towards civil society organisations (Mohan, 2002). DfID is therefore frequently understood as complicit in creating a substantial gap for Global South welfare provision, for encouraging the resultant influx of NGOs and for endorsing notions of citizenship and development which underpin these trends (e.g. Seckinelgin 2002; Biccum, 2007; Noxolo, 2012).

This 'privatisation by NGO' (Harvey, 2005: 177) is positioned as being partly sustained by Northern charitable donations, prompted by the representation of development as an issue of morality rather than politics- 'development as charity' (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004; see also section 2.2.1). Without writing off charity in all forms, or denying the existence of impoverishment, it becomes crucial to reflect critically on Northern developmental involvements in the Global South and how these landscapes condition spaces of charitable activity. Upon such reflection, the 'voluntary' or 'non-governmental' categorisation of IDNGOs deserves significant revision- IDNGOs are thoroughly co-produced by state agendas.

2.3.4 Relating to the state and the public: questions of funding and governance

Having sketched some more general developments, I now explore how specific politics of funding and regulation contribute to IDNGO neoliberalisation. Firstly, state activity conditions the funding landscapes in which IDNGOs operate. In 2010/11, £329m was granted by DfID to 'civil society organisations' (CSOs), including IDNGOs (DfID, 2011). This represents just 4.28% of DfID's total 2010/11 budget (£7.689bn), the other 95.72% being routed through the EU, UN, the World Bank, global funds, national governments, private businesses and non-UK NGOs (DfID, 2011). Therefore, despite the current government's ring-fencing and raising of the aid budget to £11.5bn in October 2011, the total available to IDNGOs remains relatively small and the competition for these grants intense. Application procedures for Programme Partnership Agreements (PPAs), DfID's major funding mechanism for CSOs, are rigorous and demand demonstrable evidence of organisational 'consistency' with DfID agendas and values, including neoliberal principles of transparency, accountability, value for money, performance analysis and service delivery (DfID, 2010). Three major IDNGOs offering child sponsorship also have PPAs with DfID (these are ActionAid, Plan International and World Vision). For these organisations and for others seeking to rival them, pressures therefore exist for their emulation of neoliberal principles.

Since direct state funding is limited, many IDNGOs rely heavily on voluntary income sources⁹, increasing their vulnerability to market pressures and incentivising the commercialisation of their devices. Child sponsorship schemes themselves are ineligible for government funding (though their parent organisations might still qualify), relying totally on voluntary contributions. Their management and promotion thus become orientated towards enticing public donations. Though such donations to IDNGOs have been increasing for three decades faster than all other charitable causes and growth in household income (Atkinson et al, 2008), they are currently being affected negatively by economic decline, creating a sector-wide atmosphere of fiscal anxiety that is being both heralded and exacerbated by the mass media (Arulampalam et al, 2009). This puts further pressure on IDNGOs to infuse fund-raising strategies with commercial potential.

⁹ Other income sources include trust funds and corporate sponsorship (Desforges, 2004), contractual transactions and investment portfolios, though the latter tend to be the domain of larger organisations (Bryson et al, 2002).

In a strange twist, the dependence of IDNGOs on voluntary donations results in their further dependence on the state through the mechanism of Gift Aid, which allows tax reclamation (an extra 25%) on voluntary donations. Here, funds designated as state-owned are reclaimed by IDNGOs; in practice, this money is often put towards administration (allowing promotional emphases on sending more public donations to where they are most needed) or used as insurance. In both cases, government money neoliberalises IDNGOs by making them appear more efficient and flexible¹⁰, though of course it might simultaneously be viewed as an 'inefficient' welfare prop. It therefore constitutes an interesting dynamic within IDNGOs that shapes both state and public relations.

Sponsorship's surge in popularity since the 1970s prompts questions about its apparent propensity to flourish within neoliberal politico-economic environments. However, sponsorship's success does not necessarily rest on its neoliberal congruencies, and can even turn on its inconsistency, or *lack* of 'strategic fit', with neoliberal environments. For instance, the traditional promise of sponsors connecting with specific children sits well with neoliberal emphases on individualism, and seductively appears to render IDNGOs more transparent and accountable. However, such individualistic rhetoric also provokes critiques of the inefficient, inflexible use of resources (e.g. Buchanan, 2011; Stalker, 1982). Here, organisational intersections with neoliberalism are neither simple nor hegemonic, but instead multiple, fragmentary and internally contradictory. The following section discusses this more dynamic account of the relationship between neoliberalism and charity.

2.3.5 Discussion: contesting neoliberal hegemony

Neoliberalism clearly forms a significant co-constitutive influence on IDNGOs, transforming their managerial dynamics. Existing literature overwhelmingly suggests that IDNGOs are conforming to neoliberal trends and mandates; I now critically discuss the merits of this narrative, arguing that it requires qualification.

¹⁰ Interestingly, the wavering of Gift Aid is currently being called for by the Charities Commission as punishment for charities who fail to demonstrate 'good financial governance' (Lombard, 2012).

A prevailing argument regarding Western welfare provision is that Third Sector organisations now form part of a 'shadow state' (Wolch, 1989; 1990), representing 'little platoons' of neoliberalism being led in various ways to accept 'incorporation in' to the neoliberal system (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Bondi and Laurie, 2005). This reading is leading academics to note a sector bifurcation into corporatist organisations that choose congruency with these environments, and remoter organisations which retain their independence but face ever-more insecure financial prospects (Milligan, 2007; see also Dahrendorf, 2003; Milligan and Fyfe, 2005). According to Atkinson et al (2008), statistics indicate the same for IDNGOs, with a stark divide between mega-organisations associated with neoliberal restructuring (Edwards, 1999; Desforges, 2004), and many smaller IDNGOs which retain independence but do not enjoy the same resource base, becoming associated instead with low-cost, local recruitment methods. Here, several associations are lined up: small-scale activity connotes some distance from neoliberal co-option through associations with local social situations and independence from government agendas. Conversely, large IDNGOs are associated with state alignment and concomitant access to policy-makers, funding and mass media opportunities.

These arguments are echoed internationally, with critiques noting similar pressures on IDNGOs to professionalise in line with mainstream development cultures (e.g. Townsend et al, 2002; Bondi and Laurie, 2005). The emphasis on individualist articulations of citizenship in official development discourses complements trends towards the consumerisation of development schemes, whilst promulgating a narrow conception of global civil society that rests on the foreclosure of real debate (Kamat, 2004; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). Furthermore, a polarisation of IDNGOs is seemingly occurring into those willing to work with the prevailing politico-economic system, and grassroots organisations associated with independence and alternatives (Jenkins, 2009). The former are critiqued as easily co-opted into the technocratic emphases of the IFIs, becoming vehicles for the international furthering of both neoliberal agendas and longer-established tropes of Northern developmentalism (Sheppard and Leitner, 2010; Baillie Smith and Jenkins, 2011). Organisational agency is seemingly appropriated into the 'development machine', with its roots in colonialism and its latest incarnation in neoliberal agendas (Crush, 1995;

Manji and O'Coill, 2002)¹¹. These arguments position the neoliberalisation of IDNGOs within trajectories of Western dominance that far precede contemporary trends (see section 2.2). In all, the 'little platoons' notion of IDNGOs is supported in an international context, where they are read as the 'human face' of neoliberalism (Munck, 2006: 328).

However, these arguments of 'incorporation in' are also being challenged, domestically and internationally, with neoliberalism being recognised as a complex, fluid phenomenon that is not simply 'rolled out' hegemonically (Barnett et al, 2011; Williams et al, 2012). For example, Berry and Gabay (2009) reclaim the example of Oxfam to show how corporatised NGOs might still be loci for critique and alternative approaches. In view of this, the dichotomy of 'insider' organisations and 'outsider' organisations also deserves complication. In practice, all IDNGOs are experiencing the restructuring influences of neoliberalism. Subtle dependencies exist in ostensibly independent organisations, whilst seemingly co-opted IDNGOs might still manipulate and challenge neoliberal pressures. Moreover, the overlapping associations of 'less neoliberal' organisations with both small-scale activity and situation within 'local' networks deserve critical exploration. Small IDNGOs may still accept neoliberal restructuring, and may rely on landscapes of support which extend beyond the local (speculatively, the importance of the internet is worth exploring), whilst larger, corporatist organisations should not necessarily be conceptualised separately from local community situations.

Simple discourses of neoliberal co-option or 'alternatives' are therefore inadequate. The neoliberal co-constitution of the organisational spaces of IDNGOs is irreducible to hegemony (Lemke, 2002), and can therefore be expected to involve negotiation and tension as much as co-option. The following section centralises literature on IDNGO management, exploring how these negotiations might take root within organisational operations and become further complicated by the multiple tasks IDNGOs simultaneously face.

2.4 Internal organisational dynamics

¹¹ Geopolitically, IDNGOs are also criticised as being subservient to the foreign policy interests of their home nations (e.g. Duffield, 2001; 2007; Sahle, 2010).

Thus far, the organisational spaces of IDNGOs have been connected to a variety of pressures and environments, including those surrounding colonial complicities and the stresses and strains of neoliberalism. There is a sense running through this in which the spaces of contemporary charity are born of struggle. Indeed, as different (and oft-competing) demands and imperatives are negotiated both internally and externally, and as IDNGOs manage their relationships with different groups, balances must be struck so as not to impede the freedom of generous impulses in the move to strategically regulate the charity process (Bornstein, 2009). This section approaches the organisational spaces of charity through the entry points of IDNGO agendas, strategies and senses of identity, exploring their co-production in relation to key tensions emergent around pressures of income generation and neoliberal governance. Through the discussion, I argue that these organisational spaces are by nature fluid and precarious, gaining coherence and stability only through sustained performance and never escaping ambiguity.

2.4.1 Balancing act: competing internal agendas

As discussed previously, contemporary IDNGOs operate within landscapes of stiff competition for limited resources, facing a plethora of similar organisations also seeking to establish themselves. Pressures to maintain and increase income can therefore be substantial. However, academics note that this conflicts in various ways with other organisational agendas including professional development work, educational activities and political advocacy. In other words, tensions exist between the imperative to 'do good' in charitable terms, and 'do well' in corporatist terms (Tonkiss and Passey, 1999: 266). Such tensions frame the content of charitable devices, as IDNGOs seek to provide accessible, increasingly consumer-friendly schemes which engage the public but also prioritise the needs of recipients. For instance, child-based schemes like sponsorship have been criticised for commoditising children via problematic articulations of childhood, adulthood and their relationship, pandering to Northern donors at the expense of children in the Global South, and needlessly wasting resources in the drive to attractively package and promote sponsorship (Stalker, 1982; 1989; Burman, 1994; Bornstein, 2001).

Scholars often highlight how such issues become implicated visibly within charity promotional discourses. For instance, both Smith (2004) and Trundle (2012) highlight the representation of child sponsorship simultaneously as *charity*, appealing to empathic impulses and voluntary individual support, and as *development*, apprehending it through notions of empowerment and human rights. In this way, tensions provoked within IDNGOs by the need for income can incorporate deeper epistemological tensions. IDNGOs also face the apparent difficulty that in marketing their schemes and communicating key information, the discursive techniques that achieve high income yields present considerable ethical and political problems. The exploitation of graphic, emotive depictions of suffering in fund-raising imagery has long received criticism in both academic and public domains (in what is known as the ‘pornography of poverty’ critique) for perpetuating unequal North-South relations by framing encounters with pity and patronage (see section 2.2.4; Hall, 1992; Escobar, 1994; Plewes and Stuart, 2006; Lamers, 2005; Mittelman and Neilson, 2011), legitimising Western interventions and emphasising Western agency.

These approaches not only create moral dilemmas for IDNGOs, but also arguably circumscribe their political interests by engendering superficial public engagements and foreclosing spaces of debate. Such implications obviously run counter to development education agendas and other such attempts to deepen Northern ‘constituency’ engagements (Baillie Smith, 2008). Furthermore, theories of ‘compassion fatigue’ (Moeller, 1999) charge these techniques with diminishing compassionate responses in the long-term by dulling viewers’ sensitivity to suffering. Whilst evidence surrounding this is mixed (e.g. Link et al, 1995), its widespread acceptance within the international development community is stimulating re-assessments of fund-raising techniques. Unsurprisingly, many of these are characterised by a reactionary avoidance of any depiction of suffering, with noted trends including deliberate positivism (Dogra, 2007), ambivalent fictionalisation (Chouliaraki, 2011) and the sexualisation of appeals (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008; Richey and Ponte, 2008). According to Cameron and Haanstra (2008), these ‘safe bets’ still perpetuate unequal imaginaries and encounters with their unabashed celebrations of Northern lifestyles. Similarly, Chouliaraki’s (2011) assessment is

that their 'playful textualities' distance other voices in favour of market consumerism and continued Western-centrism.

Whether predicated on suffering or empowerment, prevailing tropes can be understood as co-constructing charitable space around *spectacle*. Guy Debord used the concept of spectacle to denote the late capitalist replacement of lived relations with representation in a "*social relationship between people that is mediated by images*" (Debord, 1994 [1967]). As Best (1989) argues, in the 'society of the spectacle' the use value of commodities comes to be supplanted by their *perceived* use value, articulated through images. This is apparent in the very structure of contemporary humanitarianism, which increasingly proffers schemes (such as sponsorship) based on a spectacle of 'following the thing' (Cook et al, 2004), offering donors some opportunity (or feeling) of witnessing the transformation achieved by their donation (Korf, 2005; see also Lorimer and Whatmore, 2009). It is also visible in IDNGO promotions, which in sponsorship turn on the strategic interrelation of certain narratives of childhood, poverty and personal responsibility (see section 2.2.2). According to Chouliaraki, this mobilises an 'ambivalent moral agency', relying on fundamentally unequal responses of empathy and gratitude which disempower others by "*appropriating their otherness in Western discourses of identity and agency*" (2010: 113).

Thus, whether spectacles of suffering, of hope, or even of the recent cult of celebrity (e.g. Yrjola, 2011; Repo and Yrjola, 2011), they inevitably act to conceal crucial aspects of complexity and power (Chouliaraki, 2010; Bourdieu, 1977). This seems to centralise colonial complicities once again, since contemporary charitable spectacles are predicated on a "*fascination with exotic alterity*" which has its roots in colonial voyeurism (Lorimer, 2010: 318). Therefore, whilst the charitable mobilisation of spectacle may render schemes more emotively powerful, it also discursively narrows the spaces of encounter with which the public are presented, prohibiting more attentive responses to the needs and concerns of others. However, its utility as a fund-raising and brand-establishing tool for IDNGOs is such that alternative approaches may be deemed undesirable.

Thus, the structure and representation of charitable devices, whilst forming potentially important arenas for the stimulation of more ethical encounters with otherness, are read instead as consistently reproducing problematic narratives. In part, this is because they are born of a tension between the need for financially productive discourses and other, deeper organisational goals. Critical analyses voice a need for more complex imagery that is politically more inspiring and ethically less problematic (e.g. Dogra, 2007; Cameron and Haanstra, 2008). Otherwise, in their over-reliance on evocative but ethically 'improper' forms of distance (Chouliaraki, 2011; Silverstone, 2002), IDNGOs risk entrenching long-standing inequalities by apprehending global space in ways which obscure the complex power dynamics underlying questions of development.

2.4.2 Neoliberal governance, or governing neoliberalism?

The growing influence of neoliberal principles within IDNGO governance can cause tension for IDNGOs seeking less ideologically hampered alternatives to mainstream development (Lewis, 2003). However, the ways in which such tension becomes implicated within organisational space are poorly documented in academic literature. Here, I suggest two important areas of IDNGO space worthy of attention in this respect: organisational strategy and identity.

Regarding organisational strategy; for instance, many questions surround how neoliberal pressures work out in strategies of supporter engagement and management. How do imperatives such as fundraising, brand cultivation and good governance concerns intertwine with other organisational goals (e.g. development education, political activism) to configure relationships between IDNGOs and their 'constituents' (whether individuals, businesses, schools or less formal networks and communities), as well as the political and ethical opportunities afforded donors? How do charitable devices like child sponsorship form strategic spaces through which these pressures are governed? Furthermore, given the internal heterogeneity of IDNGOs, how do these interplays work out through key individuals, as much as through organisational structures and departments? In all, how do they (re)configure the messy, porous boundary between IDNGOs and 'society', and the specific strategies wielded to 'work' particular communities (Desforges, 2004)? How

might these interactions spill beyond top-down attempts to generate support, co-configuring IDNGO spaces in bottom-up, situated ways that might potentially speak back to prevailing neoliberal cultures?

More literature exists surrounding how such negotiations cause IDNGOs to experience identity crises, their organisational spaces becoming characterised by contradiction, contestation, and- often -confusion. These crises issue (not least) from sector-wide epistemological tensions between technocratic service delivery and postmodern questioning, ethical difficulties surrounding the impacts of increasingly commercialised, business-like strategies; and more traditional allegations regarding IDNGO commitments to donors being set against commitments to recipients, or IDNGO approaches being primarily configured by the imperative to continue organisational existence (Tonkiss and Passey, 1999; Desforges, 2004). These contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences frame organisational attempts to establish a coherent brand identity and thence cultivate trust and legitimacy with the public (Sargeant et al, 2007; Sziarto, 2008; see also Desforges, 2004); according to Smith (2004) they become publicly visible in IDNGO promotions. Likewise, Dogra (2007: 166) notes that *“[promotional] images usually mirror many complexities and pressures being faced by [IDNGOs] and their attempts at internal and external coherence at various stages”*. The external presentation of IDNGO identity as a coherent whole is thus reliant upon the negotiation of internal heterogeneity (Mansvelt, 2009), inevitably meaning that some narratives and voices are privileged and others hidden. However, Sziarto (2008) argues that this also depends upon the complex consumption of organisational brands by donors, and thus their practical synthesis with other politics and perceptions in less predictable ways.

These various insights and questionings further bolster the claim that narratives of hegemony, colonial and/or neoliberal, only tell part of the story; appreciation is also needed of the negotiations, syntheses and resistances through which IDNGOs actively manage the conflicts these environments provoke. Any notion of singular, stable organisational responses to these conflicts must be tempered with recognition of the plasticities, fluid multiplicities and complex flows of power also characterising organisational space. Thus, attention should be paid to the micro-dynamics through which these interplays

produce and perform IDNGOs, and how their inevitable tensions and grey areas are subjected to strategic management and ordering.

2.4.3 Section conclusions

It has been demonstrated through this section that the spaces of IDNGOs are imbued with tension and struggle, fluidity and situated complexity. David Lewis shrewdly describes the management of IDNGOs as an “*improvised performance in which [organisations] each seek to build and enact repertoires of ideas, tools and techniques drawn, magpie-style, from [a] wide range of sources in order to deal with the demands of their activities, relationships, organization and environments*” (2003: 341). This recognises the many roles IDNGOs must dexterously fulfil simultaneously, and suggests the porous nature of organisations within wider environments, reflexively subject to their pressures but also able to draw on their resources. It therefore captures something of the multiple, unstable enaction of the organisational spaces of IDNGOs, a theme to which I return in section 2.6. Additionally, it qualifies Foucauldian notions of governmentality, technologies and regimes of power, with a more emergent, plural conception of power which emphasises its multiple co-existences and uneven distributions.

The ways in which these complexities are implicated spatially will vary according to the specifics of each organisation, since IDNGOs each have different values, structures and approaches, and experience different positionings, networked opportunities and personalities. This heterogeneity issues a warning against sweeping statements about the nature and potential of contemporary charity, and demands a more nuanced understanding of this complexity, rather than its avoidance. Important questions, therefore, not only surround how various IDNGO tasks co-produce the devices, discourses and networks of charity extended to the public, but also how these tasks are negotiated, reconfigured and transformed in the process, including in moments of charity consumption and praxis.

Given my interest in the influences of faith on the geographies of charity, it is also important to interrogate how faith becomes implicated within these landscapes. The following section takes up this task, making no apology for further muddying the waters, whilst making space for how faith might prompt

moments and spaces of stability and clarity amidst the messiness; direction amidst the improvisation.

2.5 Faith and the organisational spaces of charity

This section demarcates important contours of the perceived relationship between faith and IDNGOs, with particular concern for the environments discussed in sections 2.2-4. Firstly, however, I clarify the concept of faith, and establish broad ways in which it is thought to be uttered and implicated organisationally, drawing particularly on the recent proliferation of development studies interest in faith-based NGOs.

Whilst I use 'faith' by way of analytical shorthand, it is important to interrogate what faith actually entails and acknowledge its diverse forms and manifestations. Etymologically, Brace et al associate it with "*a belief-ful relationship with an object that cannot be accessed through doctrinal statement and ritual alone...a gift...[that] has an a priori, which is God*" (2011: 3). Though it need not be religious (Lunn, 2009), faith is most commonly associated with a believing trust in a God or gods which gains substance, stability and authority through religious institutions, belief systems and communal practices (Kong, 2001), yet also spills beyond these. By definition, faith is built around hope in the immanent (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009) and a lack of physical, visible proof; as the writer of Hebrews defines it, "*faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see*" (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). Its 'ineffable truths' intertwine dynamically with embodied practice (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009), making presumptions about its spatialities impossible.

Subsequent discussion largely focuses on IDNGOs which publicly express a faith basis¹², since these represent an important set of moves to deliberately integrate faith with both development and charity. However, faith-based IDNGOs are notoriously difficult to pin down analytically (despite mobilising a significant portion of international development finance (Clarke, 2006)), blurring with many other organisational forms (e.g. churches, missionary organisations, representative bodies) and varying considerably in their adoption

¹² These are part of a much broader group often referred to as 'faith-based organisations' (FBOs).

and application of faith, such that “*the term ‘faith-based organization’ locks together multiple faith denominations and organizations which may in fact bear little resemblance to one another*” (Ferris, 2011: 2). Conceivably, faith might inflect IDNGOs in diverse ways, from moral principles to public rhetoric, from funding and governance bases to the belief-full actions of staff members (various attempts exist to taxonomise these organisations accordingly; e.g. Sider and Unruh, 2004; Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Noyes, 2008; Thaut, 2009; Bradley, 2009). Faith can also become an object of strategy, hidden or championed depending on the situation. Moreover, since faith inevitably muddies and exceeds fixed frames, no assumptions can be made about its confinement to IDNGOs with an expressed faith affiliation.

It is therefore crucial to balance the analytical focus of this section with the understanding that faith is not a pre-formed, unitary ‘thing’, simply adopted or avoided. Instead, it acquires meaning in multiple, diverse ways, to which this discussion strives to remain open. Instead of wading through the myriad taxonomic attempts surrounding this topic, I now start from this recognition of complexity to speculatively identify some broad ways in which faith shapes IDNGOs. These themes, most of which are recurrent in literatures on faith-based development work, provide starting points for the subsequent empirical study which are neither exhaustive nor spatially prescriptive; neither are they intended to imply fixity or inevitability.

Firstly, faith is perceived to *motivate* action for the Other, birthing and sustaining charitable responses (see also 3.5), scripting the world both as it is and as it should be. Faith motivations are founded to some degree on the ‘transcendent motivation’ of divine meaning (Smith, 1996: 9), which might be structured around religious narratives or less tangible desires and hopes. The depth of meaning involved here is noted to inspire considerable commitment and dedication (Bradley, 2005), providing a powerful mobilising force for collective action. This has stimulated academic interest in the political potential of faith motivations, in contexts of welfare provision in the West (Conradson, 2008), cross-boundary social justice (Levitt, 2008) and the geopolitics of aid (Gerhardt, 2008).

Secondly, faith is understood to foreground specific ethics which undergird action (see also 3.5). Faith-based development work is, for instance, associated with several beneficial ethical qualities: commitment, care, a valuation of persons (Flanigan, 2008), social networking capital, symbolic and institutional authority (Thaut, 2009; Mylek and Nel, 2010) and holistic approaches (Thaut, 2009). Problematic ethics are also noted, however, including proselytism (Clarke, 2007), neo-colonialism (Thaut, 2009), insensitivity and narrow-mindedness (Bradley, 2005). The ethical potentials of faith depend, then, on the specifics of its mobilisation. They also depend on its synthesis with particular cultural contexts; frequently noted, for instance, are the interplays between faith and Western developmentalism: “*Both development and faith are proleptic concepts that structure the present by drawing us into a utopian future. There is a synergy between them when they each have official status in the same organization*” (Hefferan and Fogarty, 2010: 7).

There is some debate about whether or not faith might underpin distinctive ethical approaches to development. Some scholars point to similar tethers in ‘secular’ organisations (e.g. Thaut, 2009), whilst others contend that faith traditions are uniquely positioned to prompt and resource rich alternative articulations of development philosophy and praxis (e.g. Plant, 2009), particularly when synthesised with radical critiques (e.g. postcolonialism, see Keller et al, 2004; Rieger, 2007). Whilst these debates are revisited subsequently, it is worth noting that explorations of faith and development charity should not be confined to instrumental and normative questions alone (Jones and Petersen, 2011).

Thirdly, faith provides IDNGOs with frames of reference, which configure action by providing both universal geographical imaginaries and normative ideals for specific encounters (Bornstein, 2001; Gerhardt, 2008). These frames might emerge and be negotiated through doctrinal or belief-based paradigms (Plant, 2009; Hefferan and Fogarty, 2010; Brace et al, 2011), performative and affective experience (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009), or relationships (Orsi, 2003). Depending on their adoption they might shape perceptions, ethics and normative ideals, and formal structures (Rakodi, 2007; Bradley, 2009), but will always be open to disturbance and revision.

Fourthly, elements of faith acquire particular socio-cultural *connotations*, surrounding IDNGOs with associational politics which shape their internal dynamics, PR strategies, partnerships and funding decisions (Clarke, 2007). Terms such as ‘faith’ can act as powerful signs, albeit unstable ones, informing encounters with the meanings they connote. As Hefferan and Fogarty argue: “we must unpack the varied and shifting meanings that actors assign to religiosity, volunteerism, “doing good,” development, charity, and justice, and how these notions intersect with faith and propel intervention into “other” communities” (2010: 1). It is vital to interrogate how these implications configure conceptions of faith and development into particular spatial assemblages (Brace et al, 2011), shaping action.

Lastly, faith-based IDNGOs might well find themselves caught up with specific social *networks*; networks surrounding their emergence, their support and their development projects, which vary in their degree of formal structure. For example, strong ties with a particular church or denomination may have extensive impacts on the structure, goals and paradigms of an IDNGO (Korf et al, 2010). It is also important to ask how faith is mobilised to target specific communities in financially productive ways, and how the cultures and expectations of support networks dialogically shape IDNGO action and strategy.

In sum, faith is a complex, dynamic phenomenon which may find expression in multiple aspects of IDNGO existence, including motivations, ethics, paradigms, associations and networked landscapes. Its spatial implications will undoubtedly vary, depending on hearts and habits as much as on policies and frameworks. However, the impossibility of making any grand, overarching claims about the influence of faith does not render it meaningless or devoid of potential, but multiplies its potential for meaningful being and becoming. Subsequent sections relate these discussions with the co-constitutive environments from sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 respectively, retaining a sense of this expansive notion of faith.

2.5.1 Postcoloniality and faith

I now explore how faith intersects with the framings of colonial geographies (section 2.2). The geographies of 20th century Western humanitarianism owe fundamental debts to the long-standing entanglements of

faith with colonialism (Crush, 1995; Thaut, 2009; Jones and Petersen, 2011). Manji and O’Coill (2002) identify the historical roots of Western IDNGOs, both ‘faith-based’ and ‘secular’, in colonial missionary activity, intertwining proselytising agendas with the ‘white man’s burden’ to bring civilising change (Hopgood, 2000; Fischer-Tine and Mann, 2004). Whilst colonial policy was built on a secular morality (Metcalf, 1997), the cultural fusion of Christian moralities with trajectories of Western imperial responsibility remained undeniably influential. Since the post-war rise of ‘development’ from the ashes of empire (Cowen and Shenton, 1995), faith-inflected tropes have remained rhetorically visible (e.g. associations of light and salvation with the West; persistent deployments of vocabularies of charity (Manji and O’Coill, 2002)), facilitating and encouraging developmental charity such that “*the stage is set for benevolence*” (Sheikh, 2007: 84).

In the contemporary era, these complicities are apparent not just in the significant presence of faith-based IDNGOs, but also in the ontological framings of development: in teleologies of progress and imaginaries of European redemptive responsibility. Western developmental thinking is inseparable from faith-inspired (particularly Judeo-Christian) narratives (van Ufford and Schoffeleers, 1988; Parfitt, 2009). Conversely, several scholars recognise development itself as having a quasi-religious nature (e.g. Rist, 1997; Tucker, 1999; Fyfe, 2005), preaching a gospel of European salvation and discipleship (Sogge, 2002; Grubbs, 2009; Parfitt, 2009; Jones and Petersen, 2011).

Thus, whilst faith-based IDNGOs are often treated as both connotative and reproductive of imperial pasts (e.g. Chimni, 2007), also deserving of recognition are these more expansive, pervasive presences of faith. Moreover, the easy equation of faith to colonialism is criticised, with colonialism being repositioned as a cultural and political environment in which mission activities were undertaken, but not necessarily a symbolic equivalent. Samson (2002) repositions Christianity not as a colonial tool, but as a legitimate phenomenon in its own right, beset by paradox and complexity. Furthermore, work at the interface between postcolonial studies and theology dwells not only on the colonial co-option of Christianity but also on its enduring capacity to subvert colonial hegemonies (e.g. Keller et al, 2004; Rieger 2007; Brett 2008), recognising that “*there is not only a history of theological support of empire but*

also a history of resistance" (Rieger, 2007: 6). Rather than being a tool of colonial power, therefore, the presences of faith are diverse and complex. With this in mind, I now suggest how the faith/(post)coloniality nexus inflects IDNGOs, starting from the spatialities identified in section 2.2.3.

2.5.2 Postcoloniality and faith: inflections in IDNGO spaces

In the field, the uncritical synthesis of faith with Western-centric developmentalism might multiply articulations of inequality (Bradley, 2005; 2009; Hefferan and Fogarty, 2010). Yet, faith adherences might also frame alternative approaches (Bradley, 2009); faith-based IDNGOs are positioned as uniquely able to engage holistically with the spiritual dimensions of lived lives (Tyndale, 2006) and articulate notions of cross-boundary solidarity (Levitt, 2008). Faith narratives and ethics may thus prompt disruptions of and alternatives to Western-centrism. Questions surround how this occurs, how it interweaves with more problematic ethical positionings *also* shaped by faith, and how these negotiations dialogically relate to the Western presences of IDNGOs.

The *discursive* mobilisation of faith by IDNGOs falls into two broad categories; the purposeful, deliberate deployment of faith-based languages and narratives, often in ways perceived less accessible to non-faith groups; and the symbolic incorporation of faith-inflected discourses in ways that carry broader cultural significances. Thus, critics point to the mobilisation of faith imagery by IDNGOs of all kinds to depict Western aid interventions in the Rest of the world. The 'Madonna and child' image, for instance, is often deployed to articulate care, innocence and need, provoking critical responses with regard to portrayals of race, culture and gender (e.g. Clark, 2004; Nash, 2005). Other examples include the symbols of Jesus Christ as saviour or healer (Clark, 2004), juxtaposed with the figure of the aid worker or charity donor; this resonates well with schemes like child sponsorship due to their focus on personal relationship (Bornstein, 2001). Techniques also include the spatial deployment of powerful binaries which carry faith associations (e.g. light/dark, good/evil), a practice with a long colonial history (see Brantlinger, 1985; Jarosz, 1992). How such mechanisms work within sponsorship schemes is deserving of exploration, as is

whether the lack of literature regarding alternative, more complex deployments of faith narratives and imagery is indeed justifiable.

Little literature exists beyond these points, prompting questions about how the presences of faith (whether officially recognised or not) might multiply and magnify the potential for felt senses of colonial complicity, reduce them, and/or shape responses to them. Speculatively, this centralises how understandings of faith, particularly in normative relation to identity, intertwine with particular understandings of development and Otherness, and how this prompts and strengthens certain courses of action. Consider proselytism, for instance. As discussed in chapter 1, not all faith-based IDNGOs adopt an evangelistic stance; moreover, evangelism itself is more plural than often portrayed. Nevertheless, given its long-standing association with colonialism via notions of 'civilising mission' (Manji and O'Coill, 2002; Sheikh, 2007), pertinent questions surround how faith-based IDNGOs govern their relation to evangelism in ways which cite felt senses of colonial complicity. This might entail strategy regarding its public image and praxis, or deliberate avoidance, performed multiply through attitudes and affective registers as much as official policy.

In sum, the complex nexus of faith, colonialism, and development contributes to the inescapable situation of IDNGOs within cultures and histories of colonial complicity, and to the uneven implication of these environmental frames within organisational space. Depending on the situation at hand, faith might variously become a set of resources, a paradigm, a problem, a strategic asset, or simply an embarrassment. Indeed, it cannot even be assumed that faith is always of consequence. It is therefore important to move beyond notions of faith as a fixed, singular element of IDNGO identity to a sense of its multiple, blurry, dynamic spatial implications.

2.5.3 Faith and neoliberalism

Building on section 2.3, I now explore how faith intersects with the neoliberal environments in which IDNGOs are situated, including environments of competition and pressures for the marketisation and consumerisation of charity devices, as well as for 'good governance' principles. Firstly, facing intense competition, faith-based IDNGOs might benefit from being networked

into particular faith-based support networks, given the association of these with cultures of trust, reciprocity and long-term commitment (Mylek and Nel, 2010). However, they can also be detrimental, proffering finite resource pools and potentially subjecting IDNGOs to constrictive expectations (Bradley, 2005; Kong et al, 2010). Attempts made by faith-based IDNGOs to gain support from arenas not primarily defined by religious adherence have their own issues. Whilst faith could be packaged as a distinctive selling point in such contexts, this depends on its mobilisation in ways that are deliberately pluralistic, inviting allegations of compromise (Thaut, 2009). These networked politics may, therefore, stimulate deliberate negotiations of faith tethers in the face of intense competition, though little research exists in this regard.

Pressure on IDNGOs to commercialise their charitable devices also prompts questions about the packaging of faith as part of marketing strategies. Does faith simply become co-opted into consumerised formulations of charity, or does it prompt critical reflection on commercial pressures? If so, do these prompts differ from the moral reflexivities of 'secular' IDNGOs? Faith adherences might also intersect with professionalising and good governance principles in diverse ways, sometimes seeming to underscore them (e.g. faith-inspired ethics of integrity and honesty might align with valorisations of transparency) but also being deployed to undermine them, speaking different languages and mobilising different values (Clarke, 2006; Ager and Ager, 2011; Petersen, 2011).

More broadly, since the late 1990s FBOs have received considerable attention from various tiers of government (Clarke, 2006; 2007), being perceived as enduringly significant in landscapes of social welfare, and uniquely positioned to speak into the lives of the poor and marginalised (Narayan et al, 2000). Despite the heterogeneity of their category, FBOs have thus been singled out nationally and internationally for particular attention, resulting in new partnerships and funding pots, and considerable academic and professional research into the 'added value' which FBOs might bring to the development effort (Clarke, 2006; 2007). However, some scholars note that this interest is predominantly confined to asking what FBOs can offer the prevailing [Western, neoliberal] development system (Jones and Petersen, 2011), rather than making space for the disruptions and difficulties faith might prompt. According to

Hefferan and Fogarty (2010), FBOs which accept greater levels of partnership with neoliberal interests are more likely to be those with more accommodative, theologically liberal faith stances. However, in line with the need for the insider-outsider dichotomy to be complicated (see section 2.3.5), none of these associations should be assumed. Capacities for resistance should not be associated only with faith-based IDNGOs that are theologically conservative, and/or unwilling to work closely with neoliberal institutions and cultures; research must instead remain open to the uneven ways in which faith intersects with neoliberal trends.

2.5.4 Faith and the complexities of organisational identity

Section 2.4 outlined several tasks facing contemporary IDNGOs, particularly concerning income generation and neoliberal pressures for good governance, imbuing IDNGO identity (that is, perceptions of shared being and visions for normative becoming) with tension and contradiction. Here, I suggest how official faith bases (as statements of organisational identity) also inflect IDNGOs with both tensions and opportunities.

The connections between faith identities and organisational structures remain woefully ill-researched (Barnett, 2008), and typologies seeking to grasp their variety have been criticised for lacking nuance and consensus (Noyes, 2008). However, self-expressed affiliation is widely regarded as a central way in which organisations can be distinguished as faith-based (Jeavons, 1998; Sider and Unruh, 2004; Thaut, 2009; Bradley, 2009), visible not only in mission statements, affiliations, staffing policies, funding decisions and support networks (Sider and Unruh, 2004), but also in day-to-day relations, decisions and practices. The diversity of forms which such an identity might take, argues Bradley (2009), leads to an enormous diversity in individual and corporate practice. Whilst 'degree of religiosity' (Thaut, 2009) or 'level of faith' (Scott, 2003) may seem a helpful axis upon which to organise this diversity, it is only helpful in as much as it is complemented with insights into *how* faith is mobilised within organisational space.

Within this diversity, the example of proselytism has already been centralised as a key identity politics issuing from faith bases, provoking tension for many IDNGOs seeking to remain true to their beliefs, negotiate the ethical

problems surrounding this practice, and effectively govern its public representation. Alongside such overt agendas, faith bases might also prompt practices and priorities which run counter to broader cultures of development. For example, they might centralise spirituality in ways which overcome the pervasive Western spirituality/materiality dualism, enriching materialist approaches to poverty (Tyndale, 2006; Bradley, 2009). The languages and values of faith can be alien to secular discourses of development, putting faith-based IDNGOs in a position of constant struggle over fragmented fidelities and expectations (Ager and Ager, 2011; Petersen, 2011). However, scholars also note that faith-based organisational existences and wider 'secular' development cultures may not always be noticeably divergent (Bradley, 2009; Ferris, 2011). Indeed, the blurriness between 'faith' and 'secular' (see also chapter 3) can be such that 'faith-based' IDNGOs are barely distinguishable from their 'secular' counterparts (Thaut, 2009).

These various positionings and negotiations provide focal points of interest regarding questions of how faith might influence organisational responses to financial pressures and governance dilemmas. Faith might provide a stable point of reference through which both individuals and organisations produce and perform a coherent sense of who they are and what they seek to achieve. This stability can undergird a collective potential of faith to bind people into communities in ways which could provide a possible foundation for development alternatives (Snyder, 2011). However, the inscription of faith into organisational structures and mission statements does not guarantee its stability or its immunity from transformation. Faith-based identities can be circumscribed practically by externally-imposed agendas (Bradley, 2009); furthermore, faith bases might also be subject to internal negotiation, manipulation and disruption. Finally, then, it is important to interrogate the topography of faith as it is taken up (or avoided) within IDNGOs, since this will inevitably involve complex configurations of stability and instability, evenness and unevenness, unity and fragmentation.

2.5.5 Section conclusions

This section has focused predominantly on cognitive faith adherences and how these become implicated in the spaces of IDNGOs, particularly in

ways which interrelate with the other co-constitutive environments discussed in this chapter. In so doing, it has also valorised less obvious manifestations of faith and belief, making room for their diverse potential implications.

Two points about faith can be drawn out of the discussion so far, which help in pinning it down for analysis. Firstly, any sense of its distinctiveness, whether philosophical, ethical or otherwise, is always relative to the specificities of its practical, situated performance. This re-routes the potentially subversive, collectively inspiring capacities of faith through the minutiae of practice and the possibilities of encounter. It certainly prompts an empirical remit which extends far beyond mission statements, to account for the spatial manifestations of lived faith. Secondly, whilst it is important to interrogate the diversities of faith within individual and corporate existence, it is also vital to explore its formulation as a deliberate, strategically governed element of organisational identity, and to ask how this intentional management intersects with its inevitable dynamism.

In sum, it is important to open up the possibility of thinking about faith more expansively than simply as a stated adherence or a source of moral legitimacy. Whilst this may, all told, be the case for some IDNGOs, this discussion has made clear that faith is implicated heterogeneously in the organisational spaces of charity. Though this renders analysis more difficult, it also presents opportunities to challenge simplistic assumptions about the problems and potentials of international development charity, and to re-think its geographies in more politically attentive ways.

2.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has explored IDNGOs and their role in producing charitable space, positioning them as co-constituted by several broader environments and internal organisational complexities. In so doing, I have critically appraised prevailing narratives about IDNGOs and disrupted tendencies to write them off as damaging organisational forms which reproduce colonial tropes and mainstream neoliberal sector cultures, in an uncritical attempt to 'do good', or in a sheer bid to reproduce themselves. Instead, I have forwarded a more complex

account, emphasising their porous, networked characteristics and their inevitable suffusion with tension and contestation.

As a foundation for developing such an account in subsequent chapters, I would like to introduce here geographical work on relationality, which offers supplementary tools with which to productively negotiate the gaps and assumptions of existing literatures on IDNGOs. The concept of relational space has proliferated in human geography in a great many far-reaching ways, particularly through the theoretical efforts of Doreen Massey (e.g. 1991; 2005). Relational thinking exhorts us to bear witness to the ways in which seemingly stable, bounded phenomena are co-produced by social and material relations which stretch far beyond their apparent 'boundaries'. This 'thinking space relationally' (see Geografiska Annaler, 2004) provides a challenge to recognise the porous, socially-wrought nature of phenomena which appear coherent and stable (Sparke, 2007), complementing the points made about IDNGOs through this chapter.

In addition to emphasising their contingency and porosity, relational thinking also highlights how phenomena form and hold together, shedding light on the configuring practices which make phenomena seem coherent and stable. This provides resources with which to acknowledge the power-full ways in which IDNGOs are produced and ordered, as well as the politics which erupts when these ordering processes are disrupted. Strands of theory such as actor-network theory (e.g. Thrift, 1996; Hetherington and Law, 2000; Latour, 2005) are particularly important here for grasping these relational details. These are vitally supplemented, according to Conradson (2003b), by non-representational theories, which validate emotion, affect and the experiential, embodied characteristics of space. This concern for the 'doing' of space; that is, the (re)production and negotiation of the experiential qualities of phenomena over time, particularly through embodied practices and enactments (Milligan, 2007), applies not only to IDNGOs but also to broader landscapes of which they are part. For instance, a relational approach immediately challenges 'Russian doll' hierarchies of scalar responsibility and simple dualisms such as North-South and self-other (Massey, 2004), suggesting instead that 'local' charity endeavours are both shaped by the 'global' dynamics of international development, *and* vitally co-constitutive of them.

Existing geographical work on the doing of organisational space resides mostly within literatures on voluntarism, and focuses particularly on spaces of welfare provision in the Global North (e.g. Bryson et al, 2002; Conradson, 2003a; 2003b; Cloke et al, 2005; 2007; Darling, 2011). However, there is no reason why its theoretical and conceptual insights cannot be diverted to explore the diverse spatialities covered in this chapter, though they are less spatially succinct than 'a drop-in centre', 'a shelter', or 'a shop'. It is therefore my empirical aim in this study to mobilise these literatures to understand how the diverse organisational spaces of charity are configured, and how their constitutive practices, socio-material relations and non-representational textures might become spatial loci through which wider environments are registered, negotiated and co-produced.

In response to the arguments made in this chapter, this relational perspective can be condensed into three broad points about IDNGOs which underpin the subsequent study. Firstly, it is too simplistic to conceptualise IDNGOs as unitary, stable actants, separate from wider surroundings. Their relational configurations are internally complex, with porous, blurry boundaries and networked existences. Secondly, they are spatially and temporally dynamic, subject to changes in form and function and intersecting heterogeneously with other already-existing spaces within the everyday, in ways which can be subjected to deliberate management and strategy. Thirdly, as organisational space is co-produced, it becomes imbued with tension, contradiction and ambiguity that can rarely be reconciled neatly. These three points proffer a more nuanced conceptual base from which the politics undergirding charitable schemes like child sponsorship can be approached, and their powerfully simple, spatial demarcations of charity, ethics and Otherness can be critically analysed, as part of my empirical research. I now seek to interweave these insights with literatures pertaining to spaces and practices of charity donation, asking questions about how these form and function.

Chapter 3: The ethical spaces of charity

3.1 Introduction

I now turn to the production of spaces of charity *donation*. These have received next to no direct attention from geographical scholarship; however a considerable amount of related work exists regarding their various dimensions, scattered across several disciplines. This chapter draws these strands into dialogue, presenting a reading of charitable giving as deliberately and multiply ethical, as socially embedded and as performatively produced, in ways that render quick normative judgements about its ethical purchase impossible to make. In so doing, I critique a number of powerful narratives about charitable giving which currently prevail in both academic and public arenas. The first narrative equates giving to one of two extremes: either to altruism and 'pure' generosity; or to egoism and self-gratification, affording donors an emotional 'warm glow' (Andreoni, 1990) and re-affirming positive senses of self (e.g. Allahyari, 2000).

A second, related reading positions Western charity alongside volunteering as indicative of modernist, capitalist schemas of individual responsible action and active, self-determining citizenship, most recently bundled together in concepts of 'Big society', and 'global citizenship' (e.g. Barnett et al, 2011; Repo and Yrjola, 2011; Noxolo, 2012). This reading critiques the positioning of individual, apolitical charity as the preferred counter-response to the welfare failures of capitalism, and notes the propensity of charitable giving to become a vehicle through which individuals might dispense certain senses of obligation (social, religious, etc). Finally, a third reading positions development-focused charity within broader trajectories of Western colonial involvements in the 'Rest' of the world. Child sponsorship is thus unavoidably implicated in problematic relational geographies which far precede its inception; embodying racialised tropes of civility, patronage and cultural imperialism (see 2.2.2).

A dearth of empirical research on charitable giving largely leaves such apprehensions of donation unchecked in both academic and public domains. This chapter responds by drawing together several relevant literatures to rebuild a more critical, geographically attuned perspective (recognising that the above

narratives may well have merit, but that others may also be important), from which the ensuing empirical work might benefit. Section 3.2 begins by examining the gift relation that defines charity, complicating simplistic notions of altruism and disturbing the self/other binary by appraising notions of ethical selfhood and the being and becoming of donors through charitable praxis. This section also explores the 'ordinary' relational contexts in which donors are embedded, and how these relate to the more distal geographies of international development charity. Section 3.3 examines organisational attempts to mobilise charity donations, exploring how the above spaces of donation interweave with the spaces discussed in chapter 2, producing surprisingly powerful, though always ambiguous, ethical articulations. Section 3.4 uses notions of performance and performativity to theorise charitable praxis, relating this to notions of performative selfhood, community and place-making activities. Finally, section 3.5 explores the ethical landscapes of faith-based giving, presenting a dynamic reading of faith which allows for its multiple, blurry formulations and significances. In all, the chapter forwards an account of charitable giving which recognises that people negotiate calls to be ethical through multiple spatial and relational registers, co-producing not only charity, but also caring bodies, relations, places and communities.

To preface what follows, it is important to establish the conceptual parameters of charitable giving, which are difficult to pin down comprehensively (see also discussion of 'caritas' in chapter 1). Its contemporary popular conceptualisation as acts of giving to benefit others (Picarda, 1995; Bryson et al, 2002) centralises that which social psychologists term 'pro-social behaviour', a defining characteristic of human existence which develops relationally from birth (Eisenberg and Strayer, 1987). According to psychologist Hoffman, pro-social behaviour revolves around the notion of empathy, or "*the spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible*" (2000: 3). Though not completely agreed upon, empathy is broadly taken to be an affective and emotional experience in relational response to another (Eisenberg and Strayer, 1987). Charity involves the prompting and structuring of such experiences around certain moralised articulations of need and responsibility, in ways which practically result in giving responses, whether in the form of money, material goods, time or energy (in practice, usually a combination). Since the Victorian

era, charity has been traditionally organised around such socially-constructed categories as basic needs, non-humans and the environment, and specific vulnerable groups (e.g. the elderly, the young, the sick, the homeless), reflecting certain cultural delineations of social priority and certain trajectories of state welfare provision (Wright, 2002). Charitable action is largely conceived of as voluntary (Bryson et al, 2002), cementing its associations with moral principle and ethical commitment. However, it also carries associations with socio-political duty and obligation (Wright, 2002; Peters, 2011), and though commonly allied with political disinterest, is in practice inseparable from political agendas of all shapes and sizes (Repo and Yrjola, 2011).

3.2: The ethics of giving

“It is one of the beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” - Charles Dudley Warner (1872)

Charity is fundamentally organised around the relation between giver and recipient. Whilst in popular discourse ‘charity’ is often used synonymously with ‘altruism’, philosophical and sociological work on gift-giving consistently cautions against readings of the ‘gift relation’ as free, pure and linearly altruistic (e.g. Mauss, 1924; Bataille, 1991; Derrida, e.g. 1992; Caille, 2001; Osteen, 2002). Instead, self and other are positioned as thoroughly intertwined and situated. Geographically speaking, giving does not extend linearly across Euclidean distance but instead forms from multiple distances and proximities beyond Cartesian measure.

This section critically explores the geographies of the gift relationship, with a primary focus on donors (since they constitute a significant part of the empirical study). Firstly, I turn to poststructural theorisations of the subject in order to establish a philosophical basis from which to theorise these landscapes. I then consider the inseparability of giving from the being and becoming of donors, and their relational situations. Finally, I engage with theorisations of care ‘at a distance’, asking how local landscapes of giving dialogically co-constitute the distal spaces of charity.

3.2.1 Form(ul)ations of ethical selfhood

It is widely acknowledged within the contemporary social sciences that subjectivity is a multiple, fluid phenomenon that can be shaped and reshaped in conscious, sub-conscious and non-conscious ways. Such postmodern accounts have proliferated since the 1980s, challenging modernist 'Enlightenment' conceptions of the bounded, autonomous, rational self (Pile, 1992; Hall, 1996). Instead, influenced by psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstructivism, postmodern narrations emphasise the relationality, multiplicity and porosity of being. Within the geographies of ethics literature, these acknowledgements have been put to work in exploring the connections between subjectivity and ethics. Inspiration has been taken from Emmanuel Levinas (e.g. Howitt, 2002; Popke, 2003), who defined subjectivity by a foundational, pre-ontological relation of responsibility to the other which demands an ethical response (Bauman, 1993), positioning selfhood as intrinsically ethical. Scholars have also drawn on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and notion of ethics as care of the self (Popke, 2006) to explore how this ethical conception of subjectivity might be moulded around certain values and ideals, with various degrees of conscious deliberation (e.g. Barnett et al, 2005).

In particular, Barnett et al (2005) emphasise how this can occur through the 'working up' of ethical selfhood through more deliberate forms of ethical action, both via technologies and strategies emanating from broader institutional actors (e.g. IDNGOs), and through micro-practices, corporeal performances and mentalities of self-governance. Thus, charitable schemes might be positioned as devices which enable individuals to formally, *deliberately* engage in ethical activity. Other such devices include other forms of voluntarism, ethical consumption activities, environmental conservation (etc), all of which involve some sense of voluntary involvement that moves beyond the everyday, taken-for-granted caring obligations which co-constitute social life. Whilst this reading will be subsequently complicated, it is a good starting point from which to appreciate how charitable action might enable the practical, performative realisation of selfhood.

3.2.2 The vices and virtues of ethical self-investment

Whilst this working up of subjectivity through deliberately other-regarding practice might seem to complement notions of egoistic self-determination, it is

irreducible to notions of both atomistic, bounded subjectivity and self-centredness. For instance, Cloke et al (2005; 2007) refer to the work of sociologist Allahyari (2000), whose study of volunteer workers in US drop-in shelters leads her to construct an account of 'moral selving', or the practical realisation of aspirational senses of self (e.g. as generous, compassionate) through the seemingly altruistic device of volunteering. Whilst Allahyari rightly highlights how other-orientated action can become a vehicle for purposeful self-cultivation according to certain ideals of character, Cloke et al argue for a supplementary recognition of ways in which ethical action can involve a more self-sacrificial 'going-beyond-the-self' (see also Cloke, 2002), positioning other-regarding activity as fluidly, porously bringing together multiple self- and other-regarding concerns.

It is therefore crucial to disrupt any simplistic associations of self-orientation with self-gratification. Useful here is the notion of virtue, which enables a deeper, multi-dimensional understanding to be acquired of the complex interconnections between personal self-investment, ethical action and social context (Tessman, 2001; Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm, 2005). Virtue ethics, a philosophy of ethics which has enjoyed substantial recent revival, judges behaviour according to internal character traits and motivations rather than substantive content or consequences (e.g. Slote, 1997; 2000; Annas, 2005; Crisp, 2010). Recent work redeems notions of private virtue somewhat from their problematic normative ties to (neo)liberal notions of civic life (see Hopgood, 2000). Similarly, here, rather than using virtue ethics to make normative pronouncements about the merits of charity more broadly, it is deemed a useful lens through which the nuances of self-investment via charitable action might be better understood.

A virtue perspective allows for the potential of charitable propensities to act *for* others (Auge, 1998) to intermingle with desires for virtuous becoming, such that self-orientation and other-orientation are inseparable, rather than diametrically opposite (Slote, 1997). Investing in one's own well-being through other-regarding activity can be an honourable thing to do, rather than being self-promoting and egoistic (Annas, 2005). Approaching charitable action with resources from virtue ethics therefore makes ethical space for the *impurity* of generous encounters with otherness. This impurity need not, according to

Barnett and Land (2007), impede ethical giving; indeed, it is a very *condition* of generosity. The inevitable involvement of the self in the giving process enables responsiveness and attentiveness to characterise encounters such that “*the possibility of generosity...rests on the impossibility of pure generosity*” (ibid: 1073). Here, pure altruism is not only inconceivable, it is undesirable. The need for impurity is picked up on by Cloke et al (2007) in their theorisation of ethical citizenship, when they argue that deliberate ethical action is prompted by an *engagement* of the self through some form of identification with the other, rather than disengagement and self-distancing. In this way, “*ethical citizenship differs radically from politicised citizenship, being wrapped around self-recognition in and self-identification with the needs of the other.*” (ibid: 1093).

This wrapping up of selfhood with other-regarding action generates a number of questions about the spatialities of charity. Firstly, how do ethical ideals for selfhood form, cohere and circulate, and how do they get performed into being? How might these performances not only confer legitimacy onto said ideals, but also prompt their disruption and renegotiation? Furthermore, how do devices like child sponsorship configure self with other in certain ways, ways that might both stimulate and preclude more generous encounters? Lastly, how do these dynamics contribute to the broader production of charitable space?

3.2.3 The importance of the ordinary

It is also important to note that charitable activity unfolds inseparably from social context; that individuals do not engage with devices like child sponsorship from within a social or ethical vacuum. This theme reflects a wider acknowledgement within geographical work on ethics since the ‘moral turn’ of the 1990s, that everyday life is saturated with ethics and normativities (Sayer, 2003). Similarly, the theorisations of Levinas, mentioned previously, position the ethical as constructed in-relation, through lived, sensed experience rather than rules and obligations. The ethics which characterise selfhood thus precede and exceed specific engagements with formal ethical devices.

Consider how frameworks and techniques of ethical self-governance are shaped by wider socio-cultural settings. ‘Ordinarily ethical’ caring relationships and practices (Barnett et al, 2005) such as networks of family and friends, and spaces of the home, workplace, school and church, form central landscapes for

the formation and performance of ethical dispositions and beliefs (see also Hall, 2011), many of which thus become taken-for-granted and assumed into habit (though this does not preclude critical reflection or negotiation (Bailey et al, 2007)). These everyday relations and networks also form platforms which are mobilised, drawn on and (re)shaped as part of deliberate ethical action. As Cloke et al (2007: 1092) put it, "*Ordinary responsibilities for others- neighbours, strangers or sojourners –are the platform for more specific acts of ethical practice...[they] are already there to be shaped and enrolled.*" This enrolment occurs through some identification with the other, often facilitated through a specific device (ibid). As ordinary ethics are drawn into extra-ordinary action, so conversely charitable giving becomes practically routed through everyday contexts and concerns. This means that it intertwines with multiple other relations and social situations, rather than being composed of unitary self-other engagements. Hall (2011) therefore argues that deliberate ethical action formulates in *multiply* ethical ways which co-produce (and potentially rework) everyday networks and relations as much as the charity device. This sense of the relational situatedness of deliberate ethical activity, and its potential role in dialogically shaping the fabrics of everyday life, is now approached through the concept of care.

3.2.4 Introducing carescapes

Acknowledging the fundamentally situated nature of charitable giving foregrounds a need for conceptual and theoretical resources that can grasp the ethical nuances of this relational complexity. Such resources, I argue, can be found within geographical work on care, particularly in the spatial notion of 'carescapes' (McKie et al, 2002; see also Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Originating in social psychology and moral philosophy, the concept of care was taken up more radically in the feminism of the 1980s and 1990s as a critical alternative to male-dominated ethical theory (Jaggar, 2000; Beasley and Bacchi, 2005). Within geography, though mostly employed in the context of 'official' care industries such as domestic labour or childcare (e.g. Buttle, 2007), care is also aligned with debates on generosity and ethical subjectivity (e.g. Silk, 2004; Popke, 2006; Barnett and Land, 2007; McEwan and Goodman, 2010), foregrounding a vital focus on the embeddedness of ethical selfhood within the specificities of lived lives (also see Milligan, 2007; Cox, 2010).

Both gift relations and their social contexts can be theorised as made up of caring relations and experiences, many of which precede deliberate ethical devices such as charity and become mobilised and reproduced through them. Indeed, care is recognised as forming a central activity and capacity of human existence (Lawson, 2007; 2009), suffusing ‘ordinary’ social life (Jaggar, 2000; McEwan and Goodman, 2010). This suggests that the care given through charitable action will be inseparable from everyday caring relations and contexts, situated within a “*shifting and changing multidimensional terrain that comprises people’s vision of caring possibility and obligations*” (McKie et al, 2004). These carescapes might not always be ‘ethical’ in the normative sense, as care can be manifested in a variety of ways (Beasley and Bacchi, 2005); the grounding of critical care work in a feminist political agenda helpfully foregrounds questions of power in this respect, highlighting the inequalities that suffuse care relationships. Whilst charitable action may be made up of various caring configurations, therefore, these will inevitably involve power imbalances which deserve critical attention.

A focus on care also highlights how ethical schemes like charity might mobilise caring practices and relations for larger-scale, collective justice agendas, through their encouragement of personal commitment and their propensity to engage people with wider questions of social justice. It also positions the political potentials of charity devices as intimately tied up with the social worlds of donors (Lawson, 2007; 2009; McEwan and Goodman, 2010). Work on care therefore enables a multi-dimensional approach to charitable ethics that at once acknowledges its collective networked potentials and yet also valorises the specificities of individual social relations and relational place-making, without falling into the trap of uncritically reifying these situated contexts.

Connecting these points to the previous discussion of ethical selfhood, work within ethics has sought to intersect care with virtue (e.g. Held, 1995; Slote 1998; 2000) by positioning care itself as a virtue, supplementing analyses of virtuous feeling and action by foregrounding the relations in which they are embedded (Halwani, 2003) and introducing a feminist politics that productively combines virtue with justice (McLaren, 2001; Cloke et al, 2005). Caring activity becomes simultaneously a way of responding virtuously to the needs of multiple

others and a way of care-fully investing in one's own virtuous identity. This work underscores the ethical potential of self-investment outlined previously by positioning personal flourishing through other-regarding action not as a primary goal, but as a product, often unintentional, emergent from the multiple exchanges that characterise charitable encounters (Annas, 2005). Charitable action may therefore be expected to come alive through different forms of care being both exercised and accepted by the self. This begins to illuminate a more complex side to charitable activity that moves beyond a self-orientation/other-orientation dualism, as well as the shaping influences of personal social contexts, to a more nuanced, multi-dimensional reading of the many different projects and purposes weaving through each charitable encounter.

3.2.5 Sensing complexity

It becomes apparent that explorations of charitable giving must move out beyond the relation between giver and recipient, and begin to account for how donation is networked into myriad carescapes and care-full spaces of everyday life. This must occur with an attentiveness to how deliberate ethical action draws together multiple, fluid permutations of the purposeful and the taken-for-granted, the ordinary and the extra-ordinary, self-orientation and other-orientation. As such, simplistic equations of giving to extremes of either altruism or egoism deserve considerable critical revision, as do narratives of giving as purely private and individualistic. Furthermore, architectures of civic or religious duty also need to be integrated with the many other caring obligations and unobligated advances which co-constitute the relational environments of donors.

This recognition of the complexity of landscapes of donation prompts several questions about theorisations of the more distal spaces of charity. Devices like child sponsorship ostensibly extend care across distance, such that few donors ever meet recipients in person. Firstly, then, what difference does the ethical complexity of donation make to these 'bigger' dynamics- does it matter to the wider ethico-politics of aid and development? This question can be approached in two ways. Firstly, it can be appreciated that perceptions of giving dynamics interact dialogically with IDNGO strategies, shaping organisational discourses, recruitment strategies, and even the shape of charitable devices, all

of which then impact the way charity is disseminated on the ground. In other words, IDNGOs may well respond to the complexities of giving in ways which indirectly shape the 'biography of the gift' (Korf et al, 2010). Secondly, it can be approached through a critical evaluation of the sponsor-child 'relationship' offered by child sponsorship schemes, which appears to cut across the 'distant care' element of sponsorship, complicating its spatial dynamics. It is important to interrogate how sponsors give and receive care through the connection, in ways which configure local carescapes together with imaginaries of 'distant' giving. Both of these avenues reflect Massey's insight that our ordinary lives are implicated in wider global (in)equities, reinvigorating discussions of the local and the personal in assessments of responsibility (e.g. 2004; 2005; see also section 2.6). The emphases of both care and virtue on ordinary, everyday lived experience, embodied praxis and social relations sit well within this frame.

A second, related question: how might theory concerning generosity and ethical selfhood guide the normative appraisal of charitable care at a distance? It is necessary here to turn back to Levinas, whose ethics foreground an unconditional relationship of responsibility built into the very self, such that the other becomes "*the gatekeeper of moral life*" (Bauman, 1993: 85) and the extension of hospitality in encounters with otherness occurs through a radical self-vulnerability, described by Rosalind Diprose as a 'being-in-question' (2001). In Levinasian thought, ethical relations are characterised by this vulnerability, such that ethics becomes the "*experience of a demand that I both cannot fully meet and cannot avoid...That which exceeds the bounds of my knowledge demands acknowledgement...The end of certainty can be the beginning of trust.*" (Critchley, 2002: 22, 26).

Within the geographies of ethics literature, this thinking has been extensively applied to deepen spatial understandings of ethics, subjectivity and the relation between them. In particular, Jeff Popke emphasises the need to ground our intrinsic responsibility to otherness in specific engagements rather than abstract ones, supplementing Levinas's work with a Derridean politics of deconstructivism (2003; 2004). This emphasises a more active assuming of responsibility by deconstructing assumed, habituated moral codes and frameworks. Popke thus argues for a spatial politics structured by a commitment to otherness and interconnection, in what he terms the 'in-

common' (2010). In the vein of deliberate ethical action, Clive Barnett has similarly argued for the formation of ethical selfhood "*in a temporized relation of responsiveness to the surprise of otherness*" (2005a: 18). Gift-giving- indeed, any type of care -must include a giving of oneself (Diprose, 2001) with a committed 'sense *for*' the other (Auge, 1998; Cloke, 2002) characterised by a spirit of attentiveness and responsiveness (Barnett and Land, 2007) that, as Clark (2007) argues, starts with a welcome and is sustained by boundless gratitude.

These theoretical resources are helpful for approaching the 'distant care' elements of charity in a number of ways. Firstly, their shared moorings with postcolonial ethics of listening, openness and humility (Popke, 2007) suggest the possibility of their deployment to challenge colonial inequities, highlight socio-spatial assumptions that characterise charity engagements, and forge more self-reflexive, politicised pathways across distance and difference. Secondly, they proffer resources for normative theorisations of care which do not rely on problematic distance-based models of ethical relation. The extension of care across distance has historically proven problematic to theorise, appearing difficult to achieve without the loss of some of its productive power. Many critics have pointed out the tendency of care theory to privilege 'nearest and dearest' as a result (e.g. Slote, 1998; Jaggar, 2000; Halwani, 2003). However, geographical scholarship has used the relational epistemology of feminist care theory to critique such distance-based models of understanding as embedding the 'Russian doll' geography of care that pervades Western culture (Massey, 2004). This is not only analytically naive; it also underscores the neoliberal privatisation and localisation of care that "*bolsters our contemporary world order of privilege, which rests on [careless] unequal relations across the globe*" (Lawson, 2007: 5). Instead, scholars emphasise ethics of attentiveness and responsiveness that cultivate relational proximity without recourse to Cartesian distance (e.g. Barnett, 2005; Barnett and Land, 2007), valorising humility and solidarity rather than obligation. It is these ethics that appear most promising for both individual charitable encounters, and any collective politics that charity might potentially marshal.

In sum, the relational ontology of care theory highlights the interrelation of seemingly 'distant' forms of care (e.g. international development charity) with

more 'proximal' forms and manifestations. It provokes questions about how the networked socialities of charitable action dialogically co-produce broader landscapes of charity, and how these broader geographies are made manifest in the nuances of charitable practice and feeling. I have highlighted here the possibility of building ethical encounters without recourse to problematic distance-based articulations of responsibility, whilst emphasising that in practice, charity is inevitably produced and consumed in relation to multiple configurations of distance and proximity.

With this spatial complexity in mind, I now turn to the mobilisation and governance of these complex landscapes by IDNGOs.

3.3 Deliberate mobilisations of ethical citizenship

Having established that giving is a complex, situated, relational phenomenon, this section sets out to further explore its mobilisation into organised charitable action. To do so, it starts with Cloke et al's positioning of deliberate performances of ethical citizenship as involving the mobilisation of ordinary ethics, present in everyday relations and care, into extraordinary spaces (2007). This, they argue, most often occurs through some sort of device that bridges self-governance with a broader governance of welfare, as well as an ethical self-identification with the other which evokes a "*philanthropic sense of responsibility*", prompting and framing action (2007: 1092; see also Schervish and Havens, 2002).

I now explore how such ethical identifications are encouraged, governed and translated into praxis by IDNGOs seeking to mobilise generous action. A central way in which this occurs is through promotional discourses, which are approached first. As demarcated in chapter 2, discourse has long been of interest for postcolonial scholarship, which particularly recognises the power of development discourses to demarcate specific ways of knowing the world (e.g. Spivak, 1999; Blunt and McEwan, 2002; Kapoor, 2004), shaping materiality and praxis (McEwan, 2001). Indeed, IDNGOs are often, and justifiably, approached through critical analyses of their 'public faces' (Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004). However, ways in which official narrations work through and interact with the

complex ethical contexts of donors are less well-documented. Subsequently, therefore, I argue that charity discourses gain vital power by being deliberately brought into everyday, ordinary spaces and intertwined with their specificities. The section concludes that the mobilisation of ethical citizenship is neither a simple nor a linear process, but is instead multiple and muddy.

3.3.1 Apprehending needscapes: the ethical work of charity discourses

IDNGOs promote their work in the Global North using an array of discursive techniques which are disseminated (not least) through material technologies such as paper literature, merchandise, websites and multimedia resources. These techniques mobilise generous responses by demarcating spatial senses of need and aligning them with specific ethical narrations, in what are here termed 'needscapes'. Needscapes are designed to evoke charitable action by prompting and framing ethical identifications with needy others, legitimising charity devices by naturalising certain moral landscapes of socio-spatial relations, demarcating who gives, who receives and how. For example, Chapter 2 identified the designation of a global needscape through the widespread public representation of development *qua* charity (Smith, 2004; see also section 2.2.1). As a result, Northern engagements with the Global South are prevailingly framed by notions of pity and altruism rather than politicised senses of solidarity and social justice.

The demarcation of needscapes often relies on the mobilisation of certain significations which, according to semiologist Roland Barthes, dwell within signs, symbols and codes present in the components of discourse, including language and visual imagery (1957; 1977). By referencing already-existing 'social knowledge', particular messages are connoted through discourse which those engaging with it are, theoretically, culturally predisposed to recognise and accept. Such signs and symbols, and their connoted meanings, can be theorised as part of the nuts and bolts which underlay the ethical identifications promoted through charity discourse, prompting certain felt senses of responsibility.

This is usefully illustrated with the example of the iconography of childhood, discussed in section 2.2.2. The discussion highlighted how this imagery is a central fundraising device for Northern IDNGOs, particularly

because of its cultural associations with innocence and vulnerability. The child becomes a spatial metaphor for the Global South, moralised by its pre-existing connotations of weakness, purity, goodness, and need for parental investment. Whether the innocent tears of youth and the ragged clothes and dusty feet of poverty, or the smiles of salvaged childhoods and the clean school uniforms and backpacks of redemption, layers of otherness are here connected into notions of charitable responsibility in ways that rely on pre-formulated Western cultural resonations (Burman, 1994). Whilst these might foster desirable responses to devices like child sponsorship, however, it remains that what is being wielded is Barthes's 'myth' (1957), as Western notions of childhood are presented as both natural and universally applicable, despite their historical and geographical specificity. The child icon becomes a fetishised spectacle which mediates encounters whilst concealing the unequal relations upon which they rest.

In child sponsorship, this spectacle is invariably sold alongside the offer of dialogue and personal connection, promising to unveil the aid network and bring 'us' closer to 'them', much like ethical consumption narratives. But in the latter, many scholars note, this apparent unveiling is often in reality little more than a reworking of the fetish (e.g. Goodman, 2004; Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Cook et al, 2004), with the politics and relations of poverty remaining obscured. It is important to ask whether or not child sponsorship simply does the same, or if it allows alternative narratives to be spoken and heard.

The evocation of certain emotions (e.g. empathy, compassion, pity, love) through the deployment of such symbolic techniques is central to their power. In the last decade, emotions have begun to be recognised for their powerful shaping influence on relations, place-making practices and experiences of being (e.g. Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Wood and Smith, 2004; Davidson et al, 2005). Their collective mobilising capacities are termed 'affective economies' by postcolonial writer Sara Ahmed (2004), who explores how emotions can be deployed to delineate group boundaries and reinforce notions of belonging, making us for some 'others' and not 'other others' (Ahmed, 2002, see also Bosco, 2007). The implication here is that the mobilisation of emotions through charity discourses and devices has the power to strengthen and collectivise ethical identifications and senses of belonging, in

ways which might foster progressive political movements but also in ways which might reinforce stereotypical, pity-based engagements. It is therefore crucial, as Pile (2010) argues, to not become preoccupied with listing emotions, but instead to critically interrogate how they get mobilised to produce charitable spaces, relations and selves.

Another reason why charity discourses can be powerfully moving is their propensity to play up certain networks and (dis)connections and play down others, resulting in what postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak (1985) has termed practices of 'worlding', or the production of a dominant set of geo-historical narratives which perform space, conditioning our orientation towards different peoples and places. In aid discourses the mechanics of worlding are overwhelmingly visual, constructing a 'visual economy' "*through which a place and its people is enacted and our response made possible*" (Campbell, 2007: 361). Visual mediations of development have long-standing colonial histories (Lidchi, 1999) related particularly to the notion of 'the gaze' and its Lacanian associations with power and desire. Postcolonial critiques of the colonial gaze (e.g. Fanon, 1968; Kaplan, 1997; Ahmed, 1999), for instance, highlight the power relations woven through both mediations of international development and 'practices of looking' (Sturken and Cartwright, 2000). That said, more recent calls caution against a visual bias in such analyses (e.g. Gibson, 2009; Paterson, 2009), emphasising the importance of other forms of sensory knowledge as well.

Postcolonial critiques such as Spivak's ask questions about who has the power to mobilise and disseminate knowledge, how this works to (re)embed existing hierarchies and relations, and how it relies specifically upon *certain* spatial knowledges, which demarcate the parameters of what can be thought and known, and which voices are heard. The questions here, then, surround how IDNGO discourses employ knowledge in ways that performatively produce and responsabilise global space, entrenching particular ways of seeing and knowing, and demarcating certain boundaries of ethical possibility.

Empirically, these critiques necessitate a holistic engagement with IDNGO narratives which holds their framing influence in tension with an acknowledgement of donor agency; donor encounters with said narratives will

rarely be characterised solely by passive acceptance. It also necessitates a critical awareness of the complex political dynamics which underlay the public faces of IDNGOs (see section 2.4); as Smith (2004) points out, politico-ethical critiques of charity discourses must examine *both* the relations behind their production *and* the relations they encourage.

3.3.2 Networking IDNGO discourses into the everyday

The needscapes produced and disseminated by IDNGOs will inevitably vary in time and space, and may conceivably be manipulated to target particular groups, though very little literature exists in this respect¹³. Both charity discourses and devices are subject to deliberate governance, and are able to be purposefully intermingled with the spaces and networks of everyday life as part of IDNGO attempts to reach potential donors. These strategies do not simply involve bringing pre-formed discourses into ordinary spaces, but intertwining them dialogically with the cultures and expectations of host communities and individuals, and enacting them in bodily performances. It is therefore important to ask exactly how the discursive techniques of IDNGOs bring senses of the extraordinary or the going-beyond into dialogue with everyday ethics, networks and spaces, prompting and facilitating practices of deliberate ethical citizenship.

The ability to productively negotiate these everyday spaces and transfer between them, modifying one's languages, behaviour and attitude accordingly, is an important part of building legitimacy across everyday socio-cultural boundaries, according to Sziarto (2008). It entails the flexible negotiation of ordinary, already-existing place-making practices, ethical discourses and sources of moral authority (consider, for instance, the legitimate spaces of normative ethical instruction that exist within homes, churches and schools). These not only contribute to the development of the ordinary moralities which IDNGOs then mobilise, but also proffer their own specific narratives and cultures of ethical action and citizenship, undergirded by their own structures of authority. Questions therefore surround how IDNGOs seek to capitalise on these ethical landscapes by strategically intertwining their promotions with

¹³ One exception is the literature on IDNGO interactions with schools (e.g. Smith, 1999; 2004), where organisational discourses are interwoven with educational curricula through purpose-built materials and devices. This is primarily oriented around development education agendas rather than charity fundraising (though these boundaries blur and overlap in practice).

them, and how in doing so space might be opened up for the practical mobilisation of *other* modes of ethical citizenship already existent (or nascent) within the everyday. Conversely, it is also important to explore how charity devices and ethical narratives co-constitute everyday relational place-making practices, giving substance to what it means to practise a faith, go to school, belong to a family or a church (etc). How do charitable imaginaries of distant needy others interconnect with individual feelings of belonging and senses of place? Moreover, how might this reinforce (or rework) already-existent inequalities and hierarchies within the fabrics of ordinary life?

Whilst these different interweavings of ethical fabric and moral authority could occur with powerful congruency, reinforcing particular senses of identity and place, this overlapping of different paradigmatic views and value sets may also stimulate tension and contestation. In developing a spatially dynamic, multiply ethical sense of charitable space, therefore, it is vital to ask what particular politics emerge as official IDNGO narratives mingle with everyday landscapes of meaning, belief, passion and principle.

3.3.3 Section conclusions: more questions than answers...

Deliberate performances of ethical citizenship (including charitable giving) are prompted by certain ethical identifications, often (though not always) through organisational promotional discourses, which bring spatial demarcations of need together with powerful ethical narratives of responsibility to encourage generous action. However, these discourses do not exist in some spatially dislocated sphere; neither do they meet donors in simple, bounded encounters. Instead, they are unavoidably (and often strategically) worked through everyday landscapes and relations, interacting with ethical structures and configurations of identity already present in these spaces. Moreover, it also bears asking how charity devices become a performative part of everyday spaces and relations, intersecting with their power dynamics and becoming co-constitutive of their rhythms. These processes cannot be expected to be singular or easy; inevitably, the framing effects of discourse are not hegemonic, but are always open to being re-interpreted, contested and refused.

These discussions present a multiple, fluid, complex approach to the ethical spaces of charity that do not presume their spatial or temporal stability,

or the hegemony of IDNGO narratives. Together with the previous section, they build a sense of the myriad interplays which co-constitute giving, particularly as 'official' narratives and structures become interwoven with the 'everyday' contexts of donors. This complexity begs many questions about the nature of giving which only begin to be satisfied by an acknowledgement of its 'ethical embeddedness' (Hall, 2011). For instance, how are the official discourses proffered by IDNGOs understood, negotiated and actualised by donors, particularly in relation to the many other sources of knowledge and authority that shape ethical selfhood within the everyday? Through these interactions, do certain imaginaries of giving emerge as dominant, and if so, how are they circulated, embedded and contested, and how do they speak to critical postcolonial allegations of IDNGO 'worlding' and apolitical evocations of donor empathy? How do these interactions shape donor encounters with devices like child sponsorship? In sum, how do the complex ethical spaces of charity donation come to life through practical application, and with what implications for geographical understandings of ethical citizenship? The following section sketches out some spaces and processes that provide good starting points for approaching these questions.

3.4: The performativities of charitable praxis

This section explores some useful tools for understanding the working-out of charitable ethics in practice. Section 3.1 made it clear that such ethics are not pre-formed, fixed phenomena practised coherently by rational agents, but are fluid and always in-process. Charitable praxis cannot simply be inferred from official organisational discourses, since these interplay multiply and unevenly with the subjective positions and relational situations of donors. Moreover, as Cloke et al (2007) argue regarding volunteering, ethical praxis is not only shaped by the interactions between individual ethics and institutional order, but also by embodied performativities, emotions and experiences that characterise individual action. As such, I now examine notions of performance and performativity and how they might be applied to understand charitable space in ways which acknowledge the fluid significances of individual praxis.

3.4.1 Performance and performativity

As part of the cultural turn, there has been a sustained geographical engagement with performance and performativity since the late 1990s (Thrift, 2003a). Whilst debates continue to rage around these two concepts, performance is fairly consensually positioned as about bodily practice (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Gregson and Rose, 2000); not necessarily in a theatrical sense, but in a broader, event-full sense of 'practices of doing' that does not presume the agency of an intentional subject (Dewsbury, 2000). As Thrift (2000) argues, performance can be a metaphor for a poetics of encounter, where meaning is expressed through doing.

For several reasons, it is useful to position charitable giving as performance. Firstly, it centralises practices of its doing, rather than just explanations of its presence. Secondly, it brings into the frame the cross-cutting notion of the performative, which concerns the powerful, generative capacities of practice. Most literature here turns to the work of Judith Butler (e.g. 1990; 1993; 1997) and her theorisation of the reproduction of social norms and power relations via the bodily performance of identity (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000). Drawing on this, geographers have positioned embodied practices as continually enactive sense-making (Harrison, 2000) constructive of subjectivity, social life and space, through "*citational practices which reproduce and subvert discourse, and which at the same time enable and discipline subjects and their performances*" (Gregson and Rose, 2000: 441). Asking about the performativities of charitable action therefore draws attention to how micro-practices of giving enable and frame the performing-into-being of places, identities and relational configurations, and how this is fundamentally related to the reproduction of already-existing social discourses, whether concerning qualities of individual relations or broader imaginaries surrounding poverty, charity and the Global South.

Whether through Butler's emphasis on discourse and habitual repetition, or through a Deleuzian account of immanence and vitalism (e.g. Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Dewsbury, 2000), performativity is continually associated with the uncertainties and multiplicities of becoming (Grosz, 1999; Crouch, 2003a), where becoming "*necessarily entails deformation, reformation, performance and transformation, which involve gaps and gasps, stutters and cuts, misfires and stoppages, unintended outcomes, unprecedented transferences, and jagged*

changes” (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000: 418). Dewsbury (2000) characterises performativity as a ‘gap’ which facilitates change: always open, indeterminable, creative, risky and experimental. This acknowledgement positions performative praxis as always unstable, rather than prefigured by routine and existing discursive configurations, and thus as able to both re-embed and reconfigure established codes and norms (Gregson and Rose, 2000; Crouch, 2003a). Positioning charitable action as performative therefore also centralises the possibility of it reconfiguring established narratives and modes of encounter, making space for alternative readings and approaches.

Indeed, Popke (2009) has theorised that locating ethics in the event, rather than in *a priori* rules and codes, allows bodily performances to become potential vehicles for the utterance of new modes of encounter and new senses of responsibility for the ‘in-common’ (Popke, 2010). It is this spirit of openness and experimentation, of the possibilities of the unknown, that gives performativity its radical political edge (Thrift, 2003b); though of course all performative action is inherently political, its generative capacities always involving “*the saturation of performances and performers with power, with particular subject positions*” (Gregson and Rose, 2000: 441). Theory surrounding performance and the performative therefore offers significant resources for paying greater attention to the nuances and creative potentialities of charitable praxis, and thus for building a deeper understanding of its political and ethical possibilities. The following discussion examines particular ways in which the doing of charity might be conceptualised as performance/performative. Using these, it then explores three interrelated spatialities which characterise these performativities: utterances and productions of subjectivity, the production of social relations (including encounters with charity recipients), and the performative enaction of carescapes and networks.

3.4.2 Exploring charitable action as performance/performative

To more coherently grasp exactly how charitable action might be performative, it is useful to draw on the three accounts of performativity distinguished by Cloke et al (2010) regarding homelessness. The first involves deliberate performances and the tactical management of bodily praxis in order

to create certain impressions amongst perceived audiences. This draws on notions of theatricality developed by Goffman (1959) which, though rejected in Butler's work, have remained influential within geographical studies of performance (Gregson and Rose, 2000). This account also appears in Cloke et al's earlier work on volunteering practices (e.g. 2007), and in related work which connects ethical citizenship with consumption practices (e.g. May, 1996; Gregson and Crewe, 1997; Barnett et al, 2005). These literatures position practices of ethical citizenship as involving deliberate behavioural tactics, intended to display particular ethical credentials and engender certain responses from perceived audiences (including colleagues, family, friends, even the self), whether these be admiration, envy, inferiority, guilt or inspiration to similar action. These deliberate practices of self-governance intersect performatively with particular aspirational ideals (see section 3.2), and need not involve just self-orientated managements, but can also be aimed at achieving deliberate movements beyond-the-self (Barnett et al, 2005).

The second reading of performativity offered by Cloke et al (2010) involves less conscious, more habitual enactions of identity, invoking the theorisations of Butler. These enactions tend towards routinely embedding already-existing ethical and relational discourses (though subversion is always possible), disciplining subjects accordingly. Here the shaping influence of organisational discourse can again be discerned, as well as more diffuse discourses of charity and poverty which circulate through both popular culture and local social relations. This reading therefore centralises the taken-for-granted assumptions and practices involved in charitable action, as well as the seemingly banal everyday relational landscapes to which these dialogically relate.

Cloke et al's third apprehension of performativity involves non-representational, affective dimensions of encounter, which leave altogether different traces in the landscape. Whilst grasping affect is impossible, it being prior to both cognition and expression (Pile, 2010), it is perceived as an unrehearsed bodily outcome of relational encounters located at "the edge of becoming" (Dewsbury, 2009: 20), described by Thrift as "*a sense of push in the world*" (2004: 64). Affect is an open, transpersonal capacity to be affected and to affect others (Pile, 2010), or 'action-potential' (Deleuze, 1988). It precedes

and becomes constitutive of emotion, and is thoroughly intertwined with both place and practice (Duff, 2010). In this study, I would like to include a concern for affect as part of a focus on the somatic, sensuous and emotional landscapes of giving praxis and encounter, since “*any figuration of the ethical is always implicated in and emergent from the diverse sensibilities of embodiment*” (McCormack, 2003: 489). Also deserving of attention is the potential of such sensibilities to be stimulated, facilitated and framed by IDNGOs, whether textually, materially, relationally, etc. Though the potential of affect to be deliberately manipulated is seriously questioned by some (e.g. Pile, 2010), this does not preclude attempts to govern and intervene on particular ‘affective atmospheres’ (Anderson, 2009).

3.4.3 Orienting empirical exploration: the performative spatialities of charity

Three broad, interrelated sets of spatialities can be identified to guide the empirical exploration of the above apprehensions of performativity. The first involves the production of charitable selves. Charitable action, for instance, facilitates performative tactics and utterances which bring into being aspirational senses of self (see 3.2). This might occur deliberately, through techniques of self-governance which mould corporeal action according to particular ethical ideals, through taken-for-granted enactments of moral codes and cultural norms, or through affective promptings and sensuous dimensions of encounter. It is important to ask how each of these dimensions intersects with IDNGO discourses, and with trajectories of moral possibility for self-development emanating from other sources of ethical influence (e.g. religious faith).

A second, interrelated set of spatialities involves the relational situations of donors, since deliberately ethical action is performatively productive of both local social relations and caring relations across distance (see 3.2). The former involves the co-constitutive influence of charitable action on the already-existing relational landscapes within which donors are embedded, in ways which both embed and rework their norms and power relations (e.g. Cloke et al (2007) cite gender imbalances in this respect). Through these landscapes, particular assumptions about the world and about impoverished others become circulated, reproduced and assumed into practical habit. This underpins performances of care at a distance, through practical engagements with charity devices (e.g. for

child sponsorship, this might involve writing to a sponsored child). These performances are scripted to some extent by institutional devices and mediations, as well as broader cultural imaginaries, meaning that they become key loci for enactments of particular ethical readings of the world. Postcolonial criticism has considerable purchase here, as this is where practices of ‘worlding’ emerge through and frame actually-existing encounters with otherness. However, ethical possibility also exists wherein new modes of responsibility become possible in the open uncertainty of the event (Popke, 2009), stimulating the subversion and/or reworking of such inequalities.

Thirdly, the expressive, relational performativities of charity can be expected to co-produce spaces, networks and communities of care, demarcating various collective moral existences (e.g. family, school, workplace, church; or more diffuse senses of global citizenship or international development) and giving character to place in what Crouch has termed ‘spacing’ (2003a), since “*any responsible agency needs...to be understood as a place-making agency*” (Raghuram et al, 2009: 8). In enacting ethical senses of place, community and belonging, these practices perform into being wider imaginaries of charitable care, and designate boundaries of identity and belonging which necessitate a focus on their saturation with power (Gregson and Rose, 2000), their practices of inclusion and exclusion, and the politics of their inevitable juxtaposition of multiple, fractal landscapes of responsibility.

A performative account of the spatialities of charity donation therefore allows for the potential contribution of charity to a wealth of different identity- and community-building projects. It offers a multipronged, flexible approach to the ethical landscapes of giving which, without romanticising individual actions and giving relations, allows the closer scrutiny of their heterogeneity and complexity.

3.5 Faith, ethics and charity

This section critically appraises the ethical role of faith, particularly Christianity, in practices of charitable giving. Whilst chapters 1 and 2 outlined the historical interrelation of faith with charity, here I engage in more depth with

the ethical dynamics of faith-based giving, distinguishing out key characteristics whilst acknowledging its blurry, fluid multiplicities (cf. easy narratives of religious duty or self-congratulation, or proselytising agendas). After suggesting some helpful ways forward regarding questions of the ethical distinctiveness of faith, the discussion then approaches its interrelation with deliberate ethical mobilisations, finally exploring how this might work out in practice.

Firstly, however, it is important to delineate some basic assumptions upon which this discussion rests. The first is that Christianity in all its forms has always valorised charitable giving, in its broadest sense of care for others, and particularly for needy others. This valorisation emanates from theological and doctrinal narratives, legitimised by perceived moral authorities including God, scripture and religious institutional frameworks, and is intrinsically connected to Christianity's central ethos- love. Secondly, this valorisation relies upon the structuring of notions of self and other in ways which are organised (diversely) around belief in the existence and nature of God. These structurings can be engaged with through deliberate practices of self-governance, through their habitual integration into daily practices of living and through affective encounters, as per previous discussions of performativity. Thirdly, it is important to bear in mind throughout the following discussion the multiple significances faith can have. It is helpful here to refer back to the points made in section 2.5 about the different ways in which faith can shape action (e.g. motivation, ethical resources, frame of reference, etc), which apply to donors as much as they do to IDNGOs.

Within these general parameters, the interrelation of faith with giving occurs in multiple, complex ways, subject to different theological interpretations and the specificities of context and individual character. It is thus vital to acknowledge from the outset that there is no one coherent version of Christian charity. This does not mean that faith cannot have powerful individual and collective significances; simply that these are contingent and geographically and historically specific. Nor is it to say that characteristics of faith-based giving cannot be distinguished; they can. To this the discussion now turns, beginning by exploring the theological concepts of agape and caritas.

3.5.1 Delineating the relation between faith and charity

Drawing on Coles (1997), Cloke et al (2005) identify Christian love (agape) and charity (caritas) as together forming one of two main pathways which prompt charitable action (the other being secular humanism, discussed later). Many movements have emerged from this pathway, but each at their heart contain some element of love for others, expressed through practical care, rooted in the inspiration of the Bible and belief in God. Agape is the unconditional, selfless love of God for humanity, embodied in the personhood and self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ and expressed in commands throughout the Bible to love others, particularly the excluded and vulnerable (e.g. Proverbs 19:17; 22:9; 28:27; James 1:27; 1 John 3:17). This is embodied in the philosophy of caritas, or a reaching out to others through “*practical-moral charity*” (Vattimo, 2007: 44; see also Cloke et al, 2005) described by Korf et al as “*a global form of compassion*” (2010: 60). The allying of agape and caritas with Auge’s committed, connected sense *for* the other (Cloke, 2002) associates them philosophically with a Levinasian giving of oneself through sacrificial welcome.

Gold (2002) aligns agapic love with ethical subjectivity by positioning existence as “*the free choice of an individual to recognise their personhood through offering themselves to others in loving service. The more you give, the more you are fulfilled, the more you are you*” (p231). This potential for ‘finding oneself’ within an Other-regarding, Other-serving ethic does not always equate to Allahyari’s ‘moral selving’ (Cloke et al, 2005; see section 3.2.3), but highlights a more complex possibility of the purposeful meshing together of ideals of virtuous becoming with ethics of humility and service. These are mobilised through the Biblical paradox of ‘dying to oneself’ (e.g. Galatians 2:20; 5:24)- or ‘going beyond the self’, as Cloke (2002) puts it –where agape is practised through attempts to disentangle it from self-interest and self-preference. This disentanglement is always partial, however, being protected by a safety-guard of faith that such self-denial will actually be self-beneficial, whether in this life or after (e.g. Isaiah 58: 6-11; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Agape and caritas therefore turn on a productive paradox where “*whoever loses their life for [Jesus] will find it*” (Matthew 16:25, NIV), where self-sacrifice and self-investment co-produce each other. The fine ethical line between virtuous self-investment and plain self-interest is negotiated through

the notion that the former is achieved when the latter is denied, and ethical relations with others are routed through expressivity of love for God (Korf, 2006; John 15:9-17), at once celebrating, imitating, wielding and responding to His original agapic approach (see 1 John 4:10). The 'theo-ethical' (Cloke, 2010) resources of agape and caritas thus potentially provide ethically rich accounts of virtue and practical endorsements to ethical subjectivity (Cloke, 2002; Gold, 2002; Korf, 2006; Cloke, 2010), rather than emphasising bland notions of duty or self-congratulation. Their powerful promptings can stimulate deep, long-term commitments to causes (Bradley, 2005) and, importantly, practical, reasoned responses to political issues (Korf, 2006; Gerhardt, 2008). Thus, whilst an uncritical focus on Christian charitable virtue can be distinctly problematic, obscuring the politics of gifts once they are given (e.g. Bradley, 2005; Korf, 2007), the ethics/politics distinction cannot always be so tightly maintained. Gerhardt (2008), for instance, suggests that theo-ethical responses have the potential to foster a sensitive geopolitics, complementing universalist religious frameworks. Importantly, however, they will always be contingent, uneven and partial, as they are performatively, relationally brought into being.

Often guiding faith-based ethical performances is the belief that virtuous praxis is inseparable from the spiritual, and that encounter with the sacred is possible through the seemingly mundane doing of everyday life (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009). Thus, everyday relations and practices can be enchanted (Holloway, 2003; 2006), ushering notions of sacred being, acting and feeling into 'ordinary' existence. Whether through deliberate practices such as prayer, worship and meditation, through the 'alternative discernment' of spiritual dimensions of life (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012), or through the performativities of belief in God and the possibility of encounter therewith, this dialogic intertwining moves charitable praxis into non-representational realms redolent with possibility (Holloway, 2003); realms which could potentially open up new, ethically vibrant claims to space (Cloke et al, 2012).

Amongst these openings are promptings of care for the *spiritual* welfare of others. Whilst this can take many forms, such care is commonly- and critically -associated with the impulse to proselytism. Cloke et al (2005) identify this as potentially infusing action with a problematic desire to 'serve to convert', where otherness is welcomed only up to a certain point, beyond which it is encouraged

(even required) to change. This attaches a colonial ethic to giving, reminiscent of the 'white man's burden' to benevolently transform and civilise. However, as Cloke et al proceed to note, it is important to recognise the ethical nuances, tensions and instabilities which can characterise such efforts. Evangelism is a diverse, fluid and relational phenomenon that is not universal to Christian ethical praxis (Cloke et al, 2012). Despite this need for more nuanced readings, however, there is no doubt that its push to transform otherness has the potential to prohibit deeper, more committed care relationships. It also bears saying that faith, like any other axis of identity, is inevitably characterised by boundary-making practices that demarcate self from other (Brace et al, 2006). Christianity is wracked by the tension between brothering (the notion of complete equality before God) and othering (with others positioned as outsiders needing salvation) (Samson, 2002), a politics which threatens to tarnish the halo of theo-ethics and Christian virtue.

The normative resources available for moving beyond such tensions can arguably be found in more recent work on postsecularism, which employs a postmodern ethics of interconnectedness and generous openness to encounter on the other's terms. Postsecularism charts developments in faith-based living in response to contemporary socio-cultural and political contexts of 'post-Christendom' (Murray, 2004), refuting simplistic arguments of religious decline (Habermas, 2008; Kaul, 2010a; 2010b). Importantly, geographical work on postsecularism explores ways in which Christian approaches to ethical action are seeking to move beyond the problems associated with traditional faith-based approaches. Cloke et al (2005), for instance, argue that instead of recourse to a superficial secular liberal pluralism, or to religious dogma, postsecular praxis acknowledges the depth of theo-ethical resources, grounding them in radical, sacrificial action that is love-motivated rather than conversion-orientated. Postsecular praxis promotes an ethics of faith, hope and love that overlaps with a radical secular politics and incorporates an emphasis on the unseen, the miraculous and the spiritual that moves out beyond the cognitive, rationalist confines of modernism. This repositions virtue as a positive ethics that can be redeemed from agnostic deconstruction and practised alongside a reconciliatory approach to difference (Cloke, 2011). Virtue becomes a theological emphasis on intimacy with God, practical commitment to embodying

His agendas above seeking self-fulfilment, and being-for the other *a priori* to any ethical rules or structures. This social ontology of duty and virtue (Cloke et al, 2012) is about glorifying God, not the self, reclaiming the self-sacrificial orientations of agapic love discussed previously.

Postsecular approaches therefore provide resources for sidestepping the normative ethical pitfalls associated with traditional religious approaches to charity. Likewise, they also move past criticisms associated with secular humanist framings (Coles' second major framing of charitable impulse (1997)), which similarly push for conversion from others (e.g. based around behavioural change or material transformation) (Cloke et al, 2005). At this point, these brief mentions of the secular deserve a deeper excavation. The distinction of 'secular' charity relative to 'faith-based' approaches is woefully simplistic, and the notional existence of some coherent secular rationality is inadequate (Howe, 2009). However, it is possible to distinguish a helpful framing of the secular which may illuminate its potential influences on charitable impulse and praxis. Recent geographical work on secular landscapes (e.g. Wilford, 2009; Howe, 2009) positions the secular *not* as an ideological backdrop for neoliberal, imperialist European hegemony, nor as a simplistic 'subtraction story' (Taylor, 2007) equating to the absence of religion, but instead as the development of particular socio-political environments which afford religion different limitations and opportunities, as a result of various modernising forces. These forces include religious pluralism, the capitalist compartmentalisation of society and the divorce of religious authority from non-religious spheres of life (Wilford, 2009), all of which have created a 'crisis of credibility' for religion (Berger, 1967: 127) and increasingly confined belief to realms of individual choice and private practice. These pressures do not lead to one teleological outcome, however; rather a multiplicity of different responses and positions, inflecting space diversely (Howe, 2009).

Thus, the ethical promptings of donors who express no particular faith affiliation might be derived from secular discourses of human rights and Western traditions of moral philosophy (again, I am using 'secular' here not in terms of the absence of religion, but in terms of its deposed authority in favour of, whether purposefully or vacuously, self-referencing humanism), as well as self-sourced ethical frameworks (Cloke et al, 2005). Without the authority of

religion's moral frameworks and expositions of the nature and purpose of human life (though these could also remain influential), individuals might pick and choose ethical resources from anywhere (Bauman, 1993). In reality, therefore, Coles's three categories of generosity (Christian *caritas*, secular humanism and postsecular charity) blur and overlap as individuals draw together multiple sources of ethical influence and authority, in ways that change shape in time and space.

Whilst it is possible to demarcate elements of each category that are both progressive and problematic, in practice it is more helpful to ask how specific ethical responses are configured through intertwining their various elements. It has already been argued, for instance, that 'faith-based' IDNGOs are difficult to distinguish neatly (see 2.5). Moreover, religious structures and landscapes of morality still pervade 'secular' British society, founding social life in subtle, elusive ways (Holloway and Valins, 2002). Christian 'ethical freight' (Cloke et al, 2007) might therefore have bearings on charitable praxis in ways that far transcend officially 'faith-based' action. Moreover, humanistic ethics can and do infuse officially 'faith-based' approaches, in both theologically-endorsed ways (e.g. Rhonheimer, 2001) and in ways which stimulate belief-full hostility (hear, for example, the famous 1960s 'Ten Shekels and a Shirt' sermon by Paris Reidhead).

3.5.2 The distinctiveness of Christian charity

These muddy interrelations beg the question: is it at all possible (or even helpful) to talk of 'Christian charity' in any distinctive way? Certainly not in coherent, singular form; however, as already implied, there exists the potential for distinctively Christian ethical framings and imaginaries, as well as the configuration of these in ways which are not found elsewhere. According to Ricoeur (1995), this involves life being understood and actualised according to notions of belief, using religious narratives that interpret and configure events in specific ways. It is vital to ask how such understandings might illuminate distinctive notions of purposeful being-in-the-world, particularly in ways which re-articulate charitable action as more than a politically redundant ethical backwater.

Beyond absolute notions of ethical distinctiveness, there also exists a propensity amongst Christian individuals and communities to actively forge pathways for action that are distinctive *relative* to their perceived environments. Christian teachings exhort followers to “*not conform to the pattern of this world*” (Rom 12:2; NIV) and to be ‘salt and light’ to others (Matt 5:13-16), living lives that counteract the immoralities and unbelief of those whom one encounters. This emphasis on distinctiveness involves the constant, situated coding of lines between faith and secular, Godly and ungodly, sacred and profane. Conceptions and corporeal performances of these boundaries create senses of individual and corporate identity (Gokanskel, 2009), contributing to the production of faith-full spaces and landscapes (Holloway and Valins, 2002) which in turn shape action. It is important to understand how such boundary-drawing processes necessarily involve contestation and exclusion (Chidester and Linenthal, 1995; Kong, 2001; Brace et al, 2006), and also how they might stimulate reflexivity regarding culturally-pervasive inequalities and power hierarchies. Caritas and agape, for example, have the potential to re-write the gift relationship by expanding it to include God, re-framing the ethical position of giver as one of gratitude and humility rather than patronage (Korf, 2006).

Thus whilst interpretations and applications of such teachings obviously vary, and notions of distinctive living will always function in relation to the specificities of situated environments; charitable devices may nevertheless become practical vehicles through which people deliberately seek to differentiate themselves from others, often (paradoxically) so as to reach out to them. I now turn to ways in which these active performances might be mobilised into deliberate forms of faith-based charity.

3.5.3 Deliberate mobilisations of faith-based charity

Performances of faith suffuse the ordinarily ethical landscapes of everyday life, moving out far beyond the spaces and practices of deliberately ethical devices. These everyday inflections can then be engaged with strategically by IDGNOs seeking support (see section 3.3), intermingling their promotional discourses with everyday spaces and moral landscapes. I argue here that through such tactics, notions of faith-based living and community can be purposefully mobilised around charitable causes; in turn, the encounters and

devices of charity come to co-produce the spatialities of faith-based living and community.

Christianity provides powerful, persuasive ethical resources which can be utilised as part of organisational attempts (whether officially faith-based or not) to stimulate generous action, whether through direct recourse to Biblical imagery and narrative, or through more subtle signs and significations; through powerfully simplistic, black-and-white deployments or through deeper attempts to forge solidarity across distance. Bailey et al (2007) argue that there is a vital need within geographical literatures on religion to explore how religious discourses and theologies (to this can be added notions of the sacred and the spiritual, see Holloway, 2003; 2006) are employed and governed to make sense of the world and how the holy is present in it. This study will arguably contribute to such a project by interrogating how charity becomes a vehicle through which global space is apprehended and scripted according to notions and ideals of faith, and through which the sacred is cultivated and encountered.

Beyond the powerful incorporation of faith signs and symbols into IDNGO promotions, faith-inflected spaces can provide particularly fruitful arenas for the creative interpersonal performance of these discourses. Whilst these spaces include any where the virtues of faith-based living are collectively extolled (ranging from homes and schools to online spaces or large-scale Christian events), I would like to focus particularly on churches, since these are often systematically targeted by IDNGOs in their fundraising strategies, and form key spaces within which Christian discourses are collectively produced, circulated and consumed (Bailey et al, 2007). Church spaces, being authoritative spaces of normative moral investment for both individual and collective identities (Brace et al, 2006), are positioned by academics as potentially key sources of social networking capital and collective mobilisation (Thomas, 2004; Mylek and Nel, 2010). Their active endorsements of generous praxis and virtuous self-cultivation, and their orientation around notions of the spiritual (though diverse), re-articulate deliberately ethical action and the extraordinary stuff of spirituality as ideals for everyday, normal existence.

I am therefore particularly interested in how IDNGOs strategically engage with church spaces and networks, including the built environments and the

habituated practices of church-goers as much as obvious teachings on serving and generosity. It is also important to ask how these movements co-constitute faithful spaces and communities, performatively producing Christian bodies (individual and collective) and reinforcing the boundary-drawing practices and imaginaries upon which these rest. How do these different sources of moral authority and encouragement come together, in ways which prompt generous action and in ways which stimulate tension and difficulty? Moreover, whilst Christian spaces appear to offer particularly rich arenas within which people are encouraged and resourced to care more and care better, how do the efforts and narrations of IDNGOs become entangled with both the *diversity* of caring approaches and the inevitable power relations existent within these spaces (e.g. hierarchies of church leadership, gender and age-based dynamics, performativities of belief in God)? How are these interactions inscribed in and through the material, emotional and symbolic landscapes of charitable action? Answering these questions will inevitably prove spaces of collective faith praxis to be complex and contested, uneven and imbued with power (Barnett et al, 2005), such that romanticised associations of generosity with labels such as 'Christian', 'church' or 'faith' cannot be easily inferred.

3.5.4 Embodying and sensing faith-based charity

A vital practical landscape through which these dynamics are brought into being is the body. The corporeal actions of donors internalise (and potentially rework) discourse and become co-constitutive of sense-making practices regarding the world, the self and others. In addition to the discussion of performativity in section 3.4, it is important to emphasise here the particular importance of embodiment to understandings of faith-based charity. For almost every religious tradition, the body is a key site for the purposeful development of virtue, through spatial practices of discipl(in)ing the self (Bailey et al, 2007). These practices route ethical action through faith-structured imaginaries that intertwine landscapes of ordinary living with theologies and senses of extraordinary being and becoming.

Intertwining with these bodily practices are landscapes of the spiritual (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009). It is vital to explore how sensings of, understandings of, and deliberate engagements with, the spiritual (prayer is a

particularly important example) might enable individuals to both inscribe and make sense of charitable space, in ways that perform selfhood, shape relations with otherness and bind communities together (Holloway, 2003; Bailey et al, 2007). It is also important to recognise that these processes might be strategically mobilised, mediated and governed (e.g. by IDNGOs) in order to foster certain responses and produce charity as sacred practice. Nevertheless, as with affective elements of encounter (see 3.4), the practising of charity in spiritual ways may open up new ways of imagining ethical being and becoming in the world, especially given its “*tension between what is solid, present, corporeal and material and that which inheres in the material as something mysterious, elusive and ethereal*” (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009: 698). The following empirical study remains open to these creative gaps and potentialities.

3.5.5 Section conclusions

It is clear from these discussions that faith can underpin charity in a multitude of ways, blurring to various extents with other prompts to ethical action. Acknowledging these complexities and diversities does not obliterate the ethical possibilities of faith-based charity, rather positions them as co-constitutive of dynamic relational landscapes which are always unstable, blurry and open. For the empirical study which follows, these points have several implications. Firstly, there is no authentic, definitive faith-based articulation of charity, and certainly not one which can be pinned down as either ‘ethical’ or ‘unethical’. Whilst particular trends and dynamics are distinguishable, responses remain diverse, multiple, and constantly in-process. Central to my empirical research, then, will be a concern for exploring these complexities.

Secondly, the ethical possibilities of theo-ethics, faith-shaped readings of subjectivity and virtue, and faith-inflected notions of being and being-for, will spill over church walls and the bounds of Christian IDNGOs and be found in diverse, unexpected places and encounters. In this sense, it is impossible to distinguish out a ‘faith-based’ or a ‘secular’ charity. Spatial traces of Christian belief and theology, and those associated with secularity, will be neither simple nor stable. However, faith-based living and ethical pursuit still constitute an everyday reality for many; faith is still practised, thought, felt, sensed, lived and poured out in ways which powerfully delineate understandings and experiences

of being, including through Other-regarding action. Of particular interest, then, are the ways in which such faith-suffused living is demarcated, encountered and performed through charitable praxis.

Lastly, working in and through this lived complexity, faith-inspired giving practices connect into wider faith-full projects of understanding the nature of being and apprehending global space, contributing to the production of particular carescapes. Might these geographies offer any useful insights for theorisations of care, ethical action and being, or the propensities of faith-based charity to resource collective movements for social justice? Moreover, how are they co-constituted in relation to IDNGOs, as well as the inevitable politics which infuse ordinary spaces of [faithful] living? In all, as Brace et al (2011) acknowledge, there is something to be said for tracing the 'correlate of hope' through the varied, uneven geographies of belief, faith, religion and spirituality, for this conjoins the eschatological, the political and the ethical with potentially fresh insights into the possibilities of social action in the contemporary period (Cloke, 2011; Cloke et al, 2012).

3.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has drawn together the available literature on charitable giving so as to disrupt simplistic narratives about its spatial and ethical constitution, laying a foundation for a more nuanced reading. In so doing, it complicates key spatialities of charitable donation, including the gift relationship, the ethical mobilisations of IDNGOs and the embodied dynamics of charitable praxis. Before I formulate these explorations into research questions for the subsequent empirical study, it is useful to attend to their implications for the three themes identified at the end of chapter 1: space, ethics and politics.

Spatially, it has been made clear that people negotiate calls to be deliberately ethical through multiple spatial registers, which interweave to co-produce the intricate landscapes of locally-lived lives. Charitable encounters with Otherness draw together fluid permutations of distance and proximity, connection and disconnection; intertwining local relational networks and place-making practices with particular responsabilised utterances of global space as

well as with the performative being and becoming of caring, virtuous bodies. Attesting to the importance of a relational approach (see chapter 2), therefore, this chapter has shown that the global politico-ethics of charity are routed dialogically through these complex spatialities. Furthermore, attention is needed towards how the traditional roles and boundaries of charitable activity are managed and performed, as well as how they are blurred and transgressed (e.g. IDNGOs do not function separately from wider publics and spaces of donation).

This chapter has also demonstrated the ethical complexity of giving, showing that ethical citizenship becomes mobilised and performed in multiple, dynamic, situated ways. Charitable donation is positioned as a deliberately ethical practice, put to work for a variety of ethical projects at both individual and collective levels. The ethics of care 'at a distance' might be expected to be more multiple and networked than usually assumed, involving multiple other caring relations and obligations. Thus, the ethical spaces and potentials of charity spill out beyond the self/other relationship, involving investments in other dimensions of donor lives and relationalities, muddying the giving process but rendering it no less full of ethical potential (quite possibly more so). Despite the highly theoretical nature of much philosophical thought about ethical encounters with Otherness, poststructural emphases on grounded encounters and responsiveness provide considerable resources for approaching and evaluating child sponsorship's complex dynamics of generosity-in-practice.

Finally, despite being focused analytically on ethics, the discussion has not shied away from emphasising the inseparability of ethics from politics. It has demonstrated that the politics of charity stretch far beyond the North-South colonial politics so commonly associated with IDNGOs, to incorporate the intricate productions and contestations of local relational configurations, identity-making and place-making dynamics, and the tensions and contradictions which infuse ethical praxis and its intersections with subjectivity. These are vital to draw into the frame if helpful suggestions are to be made about the potential of charity schemes like child sponsorship to provide platforms from which a more politicised sense of ethical citizenship can be collectively mobilised.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

It is now widely acknowledged that research involves the power-full creation of knowledge, rather than its discovery or extraction; that “*knowledge is made, not found*” (Crang, 2010: 339). Each methodological approach, and the subjectivities of both researcher and researched, co-constitute the eventual product. This chapter is not, therefore, concerned with suggesting how to achieve the most comprehensive, authoritative, impartial data possible, as much as dwelling on how my methodological decisions (trans)form the following chapters (including in ways I can never fully know), co-producing one of infinite possible accounts. Alongside chapter 1, I also seek to create methodological space to critically interrogate my own involvements, decentring my own authority by highlighting contradictions, uncertainties and gaps that emerged along the way (see Rose, 1997), and by considering my own experiences worthy of inclusion (a research diary was kept for this purpose).

Sections 4.2 through 4.4 divide the empirical research into three groups for discussion: work with IDNGOs, work with sponsors and work with textual materials; whilst 4.5 provides some further methodological reflections. These divisions are somewhat forcefully imposed; for instance, IDNGO staff and sponsors are often one and the same, or their roles blur together, and some methodological approaches (e.g. semi-structured interviews) cross-cut both groups. Similarly, the textual materials produced by organisations cannot be divorced from the contexts of their production or consumption. Thus, the following sections are organised broadly, for ease of analysis and without precluding concern for these complexities. Reflections concerning my own subjective involvement are included throughout, with section 4.6 discussing these more purposefully.

As an overarching research strategy I decided early on to employ prevaillingly qualitative methodologies, by virtue of my interest in the nuances of organisational politics, and the moral and ethical complexities suffusing charitable giving, neither of which can be succinctly captured by quantitative techniques. However, I still draw on quantitative knowledge in subsequent chapters when beneficial, particularly with regard to statistical information about

Third Sector trends and individual IDNGO structures and devices. Further to this, and also early in the process, the decision was made to restrict research to UK landscapes of charity donation, rather than to also include overseas spaces of receipt. This decision was framed by resource constraints, and also by the dearth of geographical research regarding the spatialities of charity donation, leaving ample scope for an entire thesis focusing on its many dimensions. Expanding the remit to include spaces of receipt would, I feel, have compromised the depth of analysis. However, these lines of inclusion and exclusion are also blurry. Studying charitable giving necessarily means getting a sense for how IDNGOs organise their development projects, and scrutinising the gifts that are given as well as the motivations behind them. Thus, these analytical boundaries signify broad empirical intent, rather than imposition of rigid structure.

4.2 Researching IDNGOs

Participant IDNGOs were diverse, ranging from highly professionalised international aid organisations to tiny, grassroots projects run from people's homes, many of which are neither sizeable nor coherent enough to register with the Charities Commission (several questioned my interest in them on these very grounds). Sourcing staff participants involved extensive initial internet searches, yielding 125 sponsorship schemes with British origins or administrative branches¹⁴. With express concern to experience a range of organisational types, I purposefully selected a variety of organisations from this list¹⁵, contacting them in manageable batches of 5 or 6 until I felt the research encounters were reaching theoretical saturation. Contact was made by letter¹⁶, where possible addressed directly to a relevant staff member, and followed up by email or telephone. In all, 36 attempts at contact were made, leading to 20 affirmative responses. Letters were worded to demonstrate the value of the research and offer a range of options for participation (see Appendix A), in

¹⁴ Various permutations of the search term 'child sponsorship' were used: child sponsorship, child sponsor, sponsor a child, sponsor AND charity. Even this restriction to schemes with an online presence, searchable via Google, undoubtedly precludes some.

¹⁵ This judgement of variety was based on information about size, structure and ethos gleaned from IDNGO websites and the Charities Commission database.

¹⁶ Two exceptions occurred, where personal contacts became gate-keepers who facilitated my access.

recognition that IDNGO staffs may be willing but not always able to consent to a face-to-face interview. Follow-up communication was worded in suitably professional terms; attentive to the manner of staff responses to establish rapport from the beginning.

Visits were made to 9 head offices, leading to 25 face-to-face staff interviews¹⁷. IDNGO offices varied greatly, framing the interviews therein. For instance, ActionAid offices are located in a stylish, creative part of London's rejuvenated industrial heartlands, occupying several numbers on a street of renovated warehouses flanked by design studios and chic bars. From the minimalistic, white foyer with glass doors, bright red furniture and organisational logos emblazoned on the walls, to the highly corporate departmental layouts, the only reminders of stereotypical 'charity' here were large prototype banners for campaigns and occasional splashes of wall art: artistic photographs of recipients that would look at home in a National Geographic magazine. Even wearing smart casual I felt distinctly under-dressed and out of place in this competitive, urban world of corporate charity. The power relations in which I was entangled worked against my self-confidence. My university affiliation made little difference; I felt mutedly regarded as just another researcher, one of many with who staff regularly come into contact (though this did not dampen my welcome).

By comparison, ACT offices are located on a busy thoroughfare in the centre of a Croydon suburb, accessed by a tiny wooden-framed door, paint peeling, sandwiched between a clothes shop and a hairdressers, with no external sign of occupancy. Up some dark, narrow stairs were two or three small, sparse rooms. ACT's three full-time staff all expressed considerable interest at my visit; it was the first time they had ever received research attention. Suddenly my researcher status seemed valuable, even impressive. Three other IDNGO visits involved visiting private homes, where interviews took place in living rooms, garages-come-offices, and conservatories. These varied in their professional appearance, but all came with tea, biscuits and warm welcomes into the heart of people's lives- where jobs blurred with hobbies and family life. Here, in an atmosphere of comfortable informality, my identity fluidly

¹⁷ On five occasions these were group interviews, with either two or three staff members present.

reshaped as participants expressed as much interest in my personal background as my work. Interview dynamics were therefore shaped strongly by interview environments, though not always in the same ways.

6 of the 9 visits involved interviewing CEOs; all 9 involved heads of marketing and supporter relations; 4 also involved interviews with project coordinators. In all cases, I was aware that my interviewees were 'elites' in the sense of their senior organisational positions (Rice, 2010). This never translated to their full control over the proceedings, but did create various fluid imbalances and dynamics of self-presentation. For instance, a common problem involved 'front stage' behaviour (Goffman, 1959), with participants ignoring question specifics and answering with what they thought I ought to hear, whether an official corporate position or not (see Harvey, 2010). Whilst interview constraints (e.g. single encounter, limited time) further limited the accessibility of 'back stage' information, however, I was able to prompt and encourage it through various conversational tactics (e.g. discussing debates less common in the public domain, encouraging staff to critically unpack their responses). These negotiations were helped by my identity as pre-doctoral, university-based researcher, with no professional development background (prompting participants to think critically about the vocabularies of their field) and every promise of confidentiality (putting them at ease, preventing fear of professional repercussions). Beyond productive lines of difference, there were also productive lines of commonality; for instance, as Christian staff became cognisant of my faith background, so trust was established, with respondents often acknowledging that I would 'understand where they are coming from'.

Contributing to these social micro-dynamics were locational factors (see Elwood and Martin, 2000). For instance, interviews in staff offices often exacerbated elite-based power imbalances (though not always, e.g. offices in staff homes created a more informal atmosphere). Some interviews were held in neutral locations, from cafes to parks, freeing up conversation by putting researcher and researched on the same physical level with no material barriers. In these varied contexts, my position as university researcher became sometimes a strength on which to capitalise, sometimes an obstacle to circumvent. Additionally, my interest in child sponsorship was often presumed to equate to unquestioning support; frequently leading to franker responses,

sometimes to more assumptions, and occasionally to looks of confusion when more contentious topics were broached. Interestingly, during many interviews with IDNGOs where my interest was experienced as unusual, I was treated with elite status:

“XXX (founder) began to quiz me on the latest Third Sector trends, how other charities were managing their sponsorship schemes...Both XXX and YYY were drinking in my answers...I felt embarrassed, I’ve only just started my empirical work- I didn’t feel like I ‘knew my stuff’ half as much as they hoped I might...”

Research diary extract, 13/10/11

In all these cases, therefore, I found myself playing my researcher status up or down accordingly, intentionally manipulating the ‘gap’ between myself and interviewees (Moss, 1995) in what Herod (1999) terms tactics of ‘self-positioning’ (see also 4.6).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for flexibility and ease of conversation. Interview schedules were progressively developed, and tailored to each IDNGO (e.g. using information from organisational websites). The process was, therefore, one of fluidity rather than rigid structure. Interviews were recorded where both appropriate and consented to by participants. In several instances recording was not possible, either because it was inappropriate given the situation or because discussion involved frank opinions that interviewees would otherwise have been uncomfortable sharing. This meant striking a balance between taking copious notes and not prohibiting conversational flow, and then finding time immediately afterwards to thoroughly write up what had taken place. Participants in unrecorded interviews, and any others who expressed concerns about identification, have been treated anonymously.

Single interview visits were contrasted by visits to two larger IDNGOs, ActionAid and Compassion, where I was presented with a timetable of interviews and participation in collective office activities (for ActionAid, the weekly staff ‘Learning Circle’ involving presentations from visiting project partners; for Compassion, the daily whole-office time of prayer). Whilst these schedules could be read as attempts to proselytise the researcher, it remained that in each case (aside from the gatekeeper staff member who permitted my visit) no other staff members had been informed of my visit, preventing deliberate preparation. Despite their constraints, therefore both visits nevertheless afforded insights regarding the daily practices of staff. Of the 11

IDNGOs I did not visit, 7 requested telephone conversations and 4 email exchanges, due to their own time constraints. Both of these methods, whilst slightly constrictive regarding both the depth of conversation and my getting a fuller sense of the socio-material environments of these IDNGOs, were nevertheless helpful, particularly in countering elite-based power inequalities.

A full table detailing the interview information of the 20 IDNGOs and 38 staff members involved in this research can be found in Appendix B.

4.3 Sponsors: interviews, focus groups and ethnographic encounters

To facilitate in-depth analysis, I sought to recruit sponsors from 4 particular IDNGOs, chosen from the 20 with which I had already established contact. Having realised further during staff interviews how important the dynamic of religious faith is, and also how much IDNGOs are polarised in terms of size, I wanted to acknowledge and explore these characteristics of the charity landscape in my recruitment of sponsors. Thus, I sought to select two IDNGOs with official faith bases and two without¹⁸, one small and one large in each case (with size being determined by organisational income and donor base), as shown in Figure 4.1.

I then used staff interview data to identify IDNGOs which fulfilled this matrix with particular illustrative interest, approaching pre-established staff contacts once more. This strategy had varying levels of success, and in each case influenced the number of sponsors recruited. The first two IDNGOs which I approached, Grassroots and the

Faith basis Small size	Faith basis Large size
No expressed faith affiliation Small size	No expressed faith affiliation Large size

Figure 4.1: Interview matrix for IDNGOs approached for access to donors.

¹⁸ The presence of an 'official faith base' was decided according to publicly available information about IDNGOs (e.g. online) which declared an affiliation to any religious tradition, whether this was in terms of mission, ethos, political principle, etc. This does not make claims about how such affiliations work out within IDNGOs, nor does it preclude the blurriness of faith, or its appearance elsewhere, in other forms and spaces.

Kindu Trust (both small), were pleased at my continuing interest and immediately offered to email their sponsors with a request for interview participants. This email included a paragraph I contributed, explaining the research and offering the option of either telephone or email interviews (to widen the appeal of the request). This led to the recruitment of 8 and 21 interview participants, respectively.

Recruiting a large, religiously unaffiliated IDNGO proved more difficult; the first three I approached declined my request, on the understanding that their donor database was too sizeable to universally email (implicit here was a fear of damaging organisational credibility by badgering supporters on behalf of an external, individual project). With no opportunity for access from the top down, I employed several alternative recruitment strategies, including word-of-mouth and utilising social networking sites. Repeated internet searching for relevant blogs and social networks also yielded a lead, in the form of a charitable link between Glastonbury, Somerset, and Lalibela, Ethiopia, run by a couple from Glastonbury and involving some child sponsorships with Plan (the largest sponsorship IDNGO in the UK). After establishing contact with this couple and interviewing them, I was able to contact some of their supporters for interview. These, combined with 6 Plan sponsors recruited through social networking sites, totalled 10 participants.

Lastly, participants were recruited from large Christian IDNGO Compassion through already-established personal contact with a regional manager, who contacted Compassion's South-West volunteer base (a well-established network) on my behalf. 11 volunteers responded to this call and were integrated into the research process utilising email exchanges; two offered access to local church groups of sponsors. This led to two sets of opportunities for participant observation, one focus group and several individual interviews. Thus, despite Compassion's size, its well-established volunteer hierarchy and situation within church communities made for a significantly easier recruitment process.

In total, 57 interviews were conducted with sponsors (in addition to the focus group), reflecting both ideal instances of reaching theoretical saturation and not-so-ideal instances of access issues and having to make do. The

different recruitment issues I experienced in this respect led me to dwell more on the varied nature of IDNGO networks and supporter relations. In all, however, I feel that the number of interviews I secured yielded data that was amply sufficient in its depth, relevance and intrinsic interest. Using the matrix from Figure 4.1, the spread of these interviews is detailed in Figure 4.2 (see also Appendix C for a full table of all participants and interview information).

In addition to access issues, the recruitment processes had their blind spots. Those who volunteered to participate tended to be long-standing supporters of their respective IDNGO; many had close personal friendships with staff members. This builds a picture of sponsors that stresses

<p>Faith basis, small size</p> <p>GRASSROOTS</p> <p>8 interviews with sponsors</p> <p>7 by telephone</p> <p>1 by email</p>	<p>Faith basis, large size</p> <p>COMPASSION UK</p> <p>11 interviews with volunteers by email</p> <p>1 focus group</p> <p>7 interviews with sponsors</p> <p>5 face-to-face, 2 by telephone</p>
<p>No expressed faith affiliation, small size</p> <p>KINDU TRUST</p> <p>21 interviews with sponsors</p> <p>12 by email</p> <p>9 by telephone</p>	<p>No expressed faith affiliation, large size</p> <p>PLAN INTERNATIONAL / LALIBELA TRUST</p> <p>10 interviews with sponsors</p> <p>3 face-to-face, 1 by telephone, 6 by email</p>

Figure 4.2: Eventual matrix with interview details.

disproportionately high levels of involvement, though it also meant that interviewees were able to offer rich responses.

Furthermore, interview dynamics depended very much on interview format. To broaden the appeal of research participation, I offered interviews in a number of different formats: face-to-face, telephone, and email exchanges. Where possible I favoured face-to-face encounters, but many respondents were happier/only able to converse over the phone or by email, leading to qualitative differences in the data. For instance, these latter encounters were undoubtedly more difficult to push in depth, and it was more difficult to apprehend the social and environmental settings of participants (Li, 2008), as well as bodily forms of knowledge and interaction. Email exchanges are particularly difficult to analyse comprehensively, and clarifications of meaning often had to be made. Risks

often had to be taken, therefore, in striking a balance between ethical sensitivity and academic curiosity. On the other hand, many people seemed to feel more comfortable conversing in these ways (not least, conceivably, because they remove any relational barriers produced by the physical intrusion of a stranger), opening up the conversation and often making difficult topics easier to broach. I was also able to utilise alternative rapport-building techniques (e.g. verbalising more about myself to make up for the lack of visual interaction). In all, the information I was able to gather in these formats was still particularly rich, though in different ways to the face-to-face engagements.

Face-to-face interviews were held either in a neutral location (such as a cafe) or in the homes of participants, which stimulated confident, open discussion. The participant observation involved two church letter-writing groups, one of which later formed the focus group. I had not initially set out to conduct any participant observation, and did not thereafter systematically search for similar groups within the other three case study IDNGOs¹⁹. I nevertheless sought to take any such opportunities as they arose, out of both personal interest and a desire to explore Compassion's networks as thoroughly as possible. It was also through these opportunities that I gained access for a focus group and individual interviews, and began to build rapport with those participants.

These valuable encounters involved joining in with two letter-writing group meetings (participants numbering 6 and 5 in addition to myself), and (with one of these groups) a letter-writing 'ideas' afternoon, together producing qualitatively different knowledge from that produced in interview settings (Cook and Crang, 1995). The letter-writing meetings involved members bringing letter-writing materials, past letters from sponsored children and resources such as photographs, stickers, decorative stationery and Compassion publications, and sitting together around a table to write their next letters. Invariably, this also involved a lot of resource-sharing and information-swapping, as well as general chat and relational investment (I brought my own letter-writing resources and joined in). The ideas afternoon constituted a presentation from the resident

¹⁹ I was already aware that such groups, though of vital importance to Compassion, are rarely found elsewhere. Indeed, I did not come across any others during my research.

Compassion volunteer, who had gathered together a vast array of books, stationery and other resources with which to inspire her constituent sponsors.

Each of these meetings took place where the two groups meet- one in the house of a Compassion volunteer, the other in a church coffee lounge. Each group was predominantly female (one male was present in each), and over the age of forty (each group also included one member in their 20s). Discussions were recorded, although the multiple voices at times made transcription difficult. Subsequent individual interviews afforded space for participants to talk more freely about mixed emotions than the group dynamics may have allowed, and made space for in-depth exploration of individual experiences.

Joining these groups in a setting familiar to them seemed to put group members at ease with my research identity and agenda (both were made clear from the beginning), encouraged the flow of discussion and increased my depth of understanding. Further, such opportunities for my own participation also allowed an embodied set of comprehensions to be gathered in addition to the conversational research (Willis and Trondman, 2000). Though not pursued systematically in this project, they would make a particularly good starting point for further work on the embodied practices of giving (see also chapter 8).

Out of the first letter-writing meeting, and through the rapport established there, the focus group precipitated. Despite scepticism in the methodological literature about using already-existing groups as focus groups (e.g. Hopkins, 2007), groups oriented around writing letters to sponsored children were of immediate interest to me in this regard. Indeed, rather than their established dynamics being a setback, according to Holbrook and Jackson (1996: 141), "*focus groups with people who already know each other and share a sense of common social identity have different strengths and weaknesses from research with groups of comparative strangers.*" By way of strengths, there was no sense of extracting people from their own social situations, and participants were more at ease. By way of weaknesses, group members may have felt unable to talk freely about their opinions in front of people they already knew, in a context where support of child sponsorship is assumed. Furthermore, I could not possibly have been cognisant of all the pre-existing relational dynamics coursing through the meeting, changing its power dynamics and the types of

knowledge being produced. Whilst different pros and cons could be anticipated, then, the data is not rendered any less valid.

Finally, I extended my participatory experience of the world of Compassion child sponsorship on a number of occasions, complementing the encounters described above. I attended several Compassion events, from specially planned church services at my own church, to Compassion's South-West regional supporter conference²⁰. I also spent a week in August 2011 with three other Compassion volunteers and a staff co-ordinator, manning a stand at Christian youth conference Soul Survivor. This afforded first-hand experience of marketing tactics in practice, in one of the primary spaces in which Compassion promotes itself. Encounters with the other volunteers and with conference delegates also led to some useful conversations and insights. The experience was not problem-free, however, provoking tension between my identity as researcher and as temporary advocate of Compassion's work:

"It was weird, being there essentially to 'sell' Compassion to people when I'm also striving to take a critical stance. I can't help but feel guilty...not guilty, but somehow not a proper academic." Research diary extract, 10/08/11

I strove to overcome this tension (or at least make myself feel 'proper' again) by seeking to prompt thought and discussion from delegates, rather than approaching them with a blind goal of persuasion. But I was nevertheless encouraged to think critically about my identity as researcher. In the end, I chose to remain covert to delegates about my research background, and overt to fellow volunteers. The covert/overt debate is full of ethical questions (Li, 2008), yet since my presence was about experiencing how Compassion promotes itself rather than gleaning information about individuals, per se, I do not deem it inappropriate that my researcher status remained hidden from the many hundreds of delegates who visited the stand over that week.

Whilst this set of experiences was not always easy to balance with my criticality as a researcher, therefore, it nevertheless afforded many insights into sponsorship, including into the underlying socio-political dynamics of its promotion. At this point, a brief note should be made about my analytical

²⁰ As with the letter-writing groups, I took such opportunities to engage where they naturally arose, rather than purposefully seeking them. It also remains that such events, oriented specifically around promoting child sponsorship, are nowhere deployed with such systematic force as at Compassion.

approach regarding the interview, focus group and ethnographic material (pertaining also to section 4.2). I did not see fit to constrain my analysis by adopting a heavily structured approach, but rather sought broadly to apply academic principles of rigour and critical attentiveness. Whilst each research encounter was transcribed or written up, and then coded, I also sought to remain attentive to less obvious, often non-verbal details, to which the processes of transcription and 'writing up' are particularly unkind. During interviews I made efforts to note such dynamics, whether regarding material surroundings, body language or emotions (see also 4.6), and have sought to make space for them in subsequent chapters.

By the time I began processes of transcription and analysis, I was becoming aware of key emergent thematics, informing my analytical codes. These codes were kept open as I moved through the transcripts, however, able to be developed with themes which had previously gone unnoticed. For staff interviews, codes included passion and ethos, moral principle, world-view, situated relational politics, politics of the sponsorship device and perception of sponsors (for sponsors, these also involved perceptions of the IDNGO). These broad codes were then sub-grouped and finely-tuned according to emergent themes within each category, which became organising thematics for the following empirical chapters.

4.4 Textual analysis

IDNGO promotions form primary faces through which charitable support is established and maintained, and are powerfully influential regarding public attitudes to non-Western peoples and spaces (e.g. VSO, 2002). However, my interest in child sponsorship texts extends beyond representations of the Global South; I am also interested in how they relate to the political dynamics of IDNGOs, beginning from Smith's (2004) recognition that IDNGO 'public faces' belie visible professional tensions and contradictions. I have therefore sought a methodological approach which satisfies these different concerns.

Firstly, it is important to delineate the texts involved here (I use 'text' in its broadest sense, to encompass all forms of representation and communicative

media). The discursive spaces of sponsorship are surprisingly diverse; whilst traditional appeals such as newspaper adverts and leaflets are still used; other textual forms are also now widespread, in line with a general diversification of Third Sector fundraising methods (Baillie Smith, 2008). Furthermore, since sponsorship itself is a fundraising device saturated with organisational discourse, as well as something which IDNGOs orient promotional activity around, exploring its discursive landscapes necessarily also means exploring this blurriness between the device and its promotional literatures.

It quickly became apparent that surveying the entire textual landscape of child sponsorship would be impossible. I did, however, seek to explore a significant number and variety of texts to get a sense of their broad themes, in balance with deeper exploration of a few. I therefore restricted my analysis primarily to material produced by the IDNGOs I was able to interview²¹, and in line with the four case study IDNGOs identified in 4.3, I centralised materials produced by these four for in-depth analysis. I divided the resultant materials into two broad groups based on organisational intent. Firstly, there is material aimed at sponsor recruitment, organised around promoting sponsorship and stimulating charitable responses. Secondly, there is material produced to *retain* existing supporters, organised around the long-term development of donor loyalty. I expected a qualitative difference between these groups not least because many IDNGOs have staff sub-teams and sub-strategies expressly devoted to these two different goals, each issuing different publications. Thus, for the former group, materials comprise leaflets, displays, adverts, promotional films, websites and social networking activity, including audience-specific material (e.g. aimed at churches, schools). For the latter group, whilst there is some overlap, another set of material is drawn in including materials surrounding sponsorship itself (e.g. updates, reports, letter-writing resources) and supporter magazines. In addition to these I also utilised staff interview data, and other publications regarding the representational practices of IDNGOs (whether authored by IDNGOs, government, academia, etc), all of which form part of the contextual environment within which IDNGO discourses are situated.

²¹ With the exception of one (World Vision) I was unable to access, with large-scale marketing campaigns and mass potential influence.

A number of caveats are needed at this point. Firstly, all this material seems overwhelmingly visual, reflecting the apparent ocularcentrism of Western culture (see Rose, 2012), and the aid industry more specifically. However, as Mitchell (2005) defiantly states, “*there are no visual media*”. ‘Visual’ material is always saturated with other-than-visual dimensions, as well as omissions and silences that are also vital to note. Secondly, it has been important to pay attention to my own emotions during the research process. Being emotionally affected by and through research is no longer viewed as a professional faux pas to be avoided at all costs (see also 4.6). Emotions are vital to include, and all the more since they are the currency of aid campaigns, striving to elicit particular emotional responses from potential donors (Wright, 2002, see also Chouliaraki, 2010). Rather than providing a yardstick for measuring accurately how these texts affect everybody, however, my own emotions form a specific set of personalised responses (shaped by my own social situation, academic background, etc), validated as worthy of being folded into the analytical process (Widdowfield, 2000). I have thus sought to pay critical attention to how I feel in response to the material, remaining open to being affected by it in both expected and unexpected ways.

4.4.1 Textual methodologies

Concerning my methodological approach; contemporary critical analyses of representations usually deploy methodologies emergent since (or reshaped by) the 1980s ‘crisis of representation’ (Marcus and Fischer, 1986), when the social construction of representations became widely acknowledged (Rose, 2012). The concomitant methodological impasse spawned a variety of attempts to embrace social constructivism; as such, no set postmodern methodological approach to textual analysis currently exists (Struver, 2007), but rather an array of resources from which scholars may pick and choose. This opens up a helpful variety of opportunities for researchers to creatively (though also critically) approach their chosen materials. Accompanying these opportunities are persistent reminders that interrogating the textual ‘performance of the social’ is as important as exploring the social construction of the textual (Campbell, 2007; see also Mitchell, 2002). The spatial imaginaries performed by texts structure the relation between site and sight (Schwartz and Ryan, 2003), configuring the bounds of what can be thought and known (Foucault’s ‘episteme’ (1966)).

Contemporary politico-ethical critiques of aid imagery are thus founded on the assumption that these discursive messages can and have, consistently and over long periods of time, contributed to the development of shared cultural discourses about poverty, Western responsibility and global space that condition 'real' encounters (though the possibility for alternative statements and interpretations nonetheless exists (Rose, 2012)).

To select appropriate methods that enable attention to be given to this representational politics, it was first necessary to pinpoint the textual site(s) of interest to this project, in line with Rose's (2012) identification of three different sites associated with any one text- sites of production, the text itself, and interpretation. Since my expressed interest is in the meanings conveyed through the discursive materials, and how these connect into broader discursive formations, I chose to focus primarily on the site of the text itself. However, since my concern for the ways in which texts speak about organisational dynamics seems to spill into realms of production, this focus was complemented by a secondary focus on the organisational contexts within which texts are embedded, empirically bolstered by interviews with IDNGO staff, and other related publications (e.g. on representational ethics and protocol, etc).

Whilst a focus on the site of the audience would have also been of considerable interest, I felt this would render the project unwieldy. Instead, my empirical work with sponsors goes some way to exploring their interactions with IDNGOs' 'public faces' (Smith, 2004). By way of caution, however, this does not mean that my own interpretations stand as representative of how organisational discourses are consumed (as if to somehow offer *the* authentic deconstructive account and thus achieve some kind of political victory (Mitchell, 2002)). My account is necessarily partial. Beginning from this awareness, I chose to follow Struver's (2007) recommendations and utilise a combination of two critical methodologies: semiotics and critical discourse analysis. I now consider each in turn.

4.4.2 Semiotics

Developed from the work of Barthes (e.g. 1957; 1977), semiotics now forms a significant stream of poststructural methodology for critical textual

analysis (Struver, 2007). It is concerned with the nuts and bolts of language; how texts transmit meaning, through what Barthes termed 'signs' (1957). These signs reference existing inter-subjective formulations of meaning, present in other signs and texts and in broader discursive systems, to assert particular messages. Signs have different layers of meaning; particularly 'denotative' meanings (what they signify in and of themselves) and 'connotative' meanings (culturally-specific associations, qualities and ideological symbolisms) (Rose, 2012, also Barthes, 1977).

I coded the chosen materials according to various significations noted within current debates on international development fundraising texts, particularly those which incorporate a postcolonial critique of power and cultural meaning, but also those concerned with internal IDNGO politics (e.g. Smith, 2004). Thus, the following themes were of particular interest: significations about the Global South, children, poverty, the nature of giving, the sponsor-IDNGO relationship, faith, the role and agency of IDNGOs, internal organisational politics and the external influence of neoliberal pressures. However, I purposefully kept this list open to leave room for unanticipated themes and questions emergent through the analysis.

4.4.3 Critical discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is more difficult to succinctly describe and apply, being less methodologically explicit. Struver (2007) positions it helpfully as concerned with the socio-political *effects* of representations; that is, how texts co-configure certain ways of knowing and talking through the normalisation of meaning. As this meaning becomes accepted as reality, power-full 'regimes of truth' form (Foucault, 1975) which "*structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking*" (Rose, 2012: 190). Discourse analysis is therefore concerned with understanding the effects of texts on practices and perceptions (that is, the textual 'performance of the social'), mobilising a Foucauldian reading of discourse to understand how textual meanings are situated within larger frameworks of texts, institutions and practices.

Critical discourse analyses thus interrogate texts with specific concern for their role in constructing the social world (Rose, 2012). In approaching my textual materials, I have endeavoured to utilise the methodological

recommendations made by Rose (2012), employing a concern for their truth claims and how power weaves through these claims to construct certain accounts of social difference as real and natural. Drawing these concerns together with the semiotic analysis, I used my coding of the texts to explore how specific meanings are made and attributed the effects of truth, how the texts fit with broader 'interpretative repertoires' (Wetherell and Potter, 1988) associated with the aid industry, and how they transmit contradiction as well as coherence. Thematically, these concerns cover three broad areas: imaginaries of the Global South, the positioning of donors regarding the charity encounter, and portrayals of the IDNGO, its role and agency.

So far, my concern has been purely for the texts themselves, and their social modality (see Rose, 2012). However, given my interest in the texts' underlying politics, I have also drawn where possible on Rose's (2012) recommendations regarding 'Discourse Analysis II', exploring how IDNGOs put their texts to work (particularly through apparatuses and technologies of display) as well as the organisational strategies and politics undergirding the texts' production. This complements my focus on the texts themselves, though remains secondary for the sake of analytical coherency.

In sum, I have sought to carry out this discursive analysis with considerable regard for current debates about IDNGO fundraising, integrating it with other data to cohere it with my analysis of the organisational spaces of charity. Through this, I intend to produce a politically attuned reading which, whilst not pretending to be a definitive critique, more fully explores the kinds of charitable space that IDNGOs produce and perform.

4.5 Critical methodological reflections

Reflections are needed, at this point, on the particular confines placed on the research by my methodological choices. Needless to say, the choice to limit my work largely to interviews and focus groups placed constraints on how much data was yielded and the type of knowledge privileged. The majority of interviews done with IDNGO staff, for instance, were single, one-off encounters, often pushed for time, and not always face-to-face. This served to constrict the

depth of discussion, and fostered the assumption that the account of each participant was somehow representative of their respective organisation. Given that respondents were mostly CEOs and other senior staff members, these accounts were mainly focused around overarching strategy and reflections on longer-term issues. Had time constraints been less pressing, it would have been helpful to extend my engagement with some sustained ethnographic work, perhaps with the four IDNGOs I have chosen as case studies. My various encounters with Compassion perhaps indicate ways in which this could have progressed.

Research with sponsors was also largely confined to one-off discussions, prompting similar issues. Another problem consisted of many participants taking the details of charitable practice for granted, making deeper reflection difficult to encourage. This meant developing my research agenda as I went along, integrating new awarenesses and intuitions as they emerged from the interviews and finding ways to open up respondents' underlying motivations and thought structures. Lastly, an avenue I would have liked to follow up more purposefully (had more time and resources been available) is the interface between sponsors and IDNGO texts. Participating in letter-writing activities was useful in this respect, and similar topics were discussed during interviews. However, I would have liked to integrate my textual analysis more comprehensively with this, to explore the finer details of how people engage with this material.

Finally, it is important to explain why non-Christian faith groups are not represented in the research sample. Extensive internet searching yielded only one IDNGO which did not fit a broad Christian/secular categorisation: Muslim Hands. I tried several times to gain research access to this organisation, but was repeatedly refused. Through the constraints of both internet searching and access grants, therefore, the perspectives of other faith groups doing child sponsorship were unable to be represented. The resultant proportion of Christian groups involved in the research is nevertheless a broadly helpful indicator of the remaining landscape of UK child sponsorship efforts, so far as I am aware.

4.6 Ethical reflections

Many standard ethical issues (e.g. anonymity, recording interviews) have already been covered in previous discussion; it remains now to explore issues surrounding ethical guidelines and consent. Following this, I reflect further on my own involvement in the research process.

Whilst I did not submit an ethics form as part of this research, I strove throughout to follow departmental guidelines for research conduct. Thus, all participants were fully informed about my identity²², the research project and content, the nature of their involvement and how their contributions would be used (this included discussions about anonymity). Recording consent was asked for where needed (sometimes it was not needed, e.g. consent to interviews over email was taken as consent to a written record). For members of staff whose titles would make them more easily identifiable, complete anonymity (i.e. job title and IDNGO name withheld) was granted where requested. I chose to rely upon verbal consent for participation rather than on written consent forms, as these would have presented what I felt were unnecessary logistical complexities (e.g. requiring written consent forms from participants who were interviewed over the telephone or by email), and would (I felt) have impeded the rapport of interviews. The only exceptions to this were the letter-writing groups, where written emails of invitation from group leaders were taken as consent to my presence. There were no minors or at-risk groups involved in the research, no realistic risk of distress or discomfort, and nobody was deliberately misled about the research or their involvement in it.

I now turn to some final reflections on my own subjective involvement in the research. In line with the postmodern refutation of 'objective' knowledge and the concept of the detached, expert researcher with a 'view from nowhere' (Shapin, 1998; Davies and Burgess, 2004), it is important to acknowledge that I am caught up in this research in a dialectic, muddy process of knowledge production. This discussion is therefore about establishing a set of attitudes towards this involvement which underpin subsequent analysis, starting with a critical recognition of the futility of grasping completely every way in which my subjectivity is woven into the research process. I am multiply implicated in ways

²² Exceptions here were delegates at the Soul Survivor conference, where my researcher identity was kept covert. This is discussed previously.

which exceed my cognitive horizons; these blind spots form part of my situated perspective as much as the reflections included here.

In response to this admission that I am neither a bounded being nor fully-knowing (Valentine, 1998), simply listing selected, selective subject positionings (e.g. researcher, female, middle class, 23, Christian) and hoping this bolsters the authenticity of my research, is far from adequate. All this does is entice assumptions about identity categories (Herod, 1999) rather than reflect more meaningfully on their specific implications. What follows, then, are direct engagements with these implications, particularly seeking to build on the reflections in Chapter 1 surrounding my Christianity.

Perhaps centrally, and as a convenient point of departure, being a Christian and researching Christians immediately dubs me an 'insider', and ushers into the frame debates about 'insider status' (e.g. DeLyser, 2001; Gold, 2002; Slater, 2004; Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). These emphasise advantages of deeper access and understanding, and disadvantages of a greater tendency to make assumptions. Indeed, I found there were many instances when acknowledging my own faith cultivated trust and rapport, and made Christian interviewees feel more comfortable discussing their own faiths. Moreover, it has allowed me to more deeply engage with their narratives, their discursive mobilisations of particular significations, and their efforts to represent the non-representational landscapes of the spiritual (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009). However, being an insider does not necessarily foster clarity in the research process (Anderson, 2006). It sometimes led to assumptions being made by both researcher and researched, discouraging deeper reflection. Furthermore, research participants often mobilised Christianity in diverse ways that I was not necessarily equipped by my own faith to grapple with better than anyone else. In fact, at times my faith contributed to a sense of unstable confusion, as my own taken-for-granted beliefs and understandings were disrupted by diverse Christian responses to poverty and the politics of development, and differing topographies of expectation regarding the self, others and God:

"If I could have £1 for every time I have been quoted James 1:27...and yet in ways that justify such different (often contradictory) courses of action!! It's one thing to be inspired or to believe, and quite another to figure that out inside

yourself in a sustained way...and work it out coherently in practice. I can feel my own preconceptions about the Christianity/charity nexus melting, and it's so easy to get paralysed by that...And yet moments and substances of ethical and spiritual life are still inescapably present." Research diary extract, 07/12/11

Insiderness does not, therefore, somehow afford a more authentic or objective viewpoint. Instead, it implicates me in specific ways, to which I can critically attend but which I can never fully escape.

Whilst the dynamics of insider status are vital to consider, adhering to an insider/outsider dichotomy is widely criticised by scholars for being both overly simplistic and too concerned with objectivity (e.g. Katz, 1994; Ferber, 2006; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). No researcher is ever completely on one side of this binary or the other, but always on both (Butz and Besio, 2009), in multiple, fluid ways which fluctuate in terms of their influence on the situation at hand (Gold, 2002). Thus, a more dynamic reading of the research encounter is needed, acknowledging the various implications imposed by the fluid, multiple presences of both my insiderness and my outsidership (e.g. my researcher/non-professional status).

Into these dynamics weave other axes of my identity, including my age and gender. For instance, the majority of CEOs and Directors I interviewed were male, and in many situations took a distinctly paternalistic tone with me, contributing to my feeling at a disadvantage in terms of having power to direct the conversation (see also previous discussion of elite power imbalances). In these instances, it often took the span of the interview to negotiate these imbalances productively. As well as moulding the conversation, this meant manipulating the self I presented, stretching my identity into different shapes (e.g. playing my researcher status up or down, discussed previously). Each encounter was therefore a mess of fluid, elastic subjective and intersubjective dynamics.

In negotiating these complex self-representations and negotiations, I found it vital to conceptualise researcher and researched as together *producing* knowledge, rather than my role being to extract knowledge from participants (Herod, 1999). In this blurrier picture, I am part of the researched (Butz and Besio, 2009): my experiences and perceptions are validated as contributory to the eventual knowledge product (see also the reflections presented in chapter

1). Deserving of further mention here are the emotional dimensions of the research. For over a decade the call to attend to emotions has been climbing the agenda of reflexive research practice (e.g. Widdowfield, 2000; Anderson and Smith, 2001). Whilst debate continues regarding how emotions should be conceptualised (e.g. Pile, 2010), and valid anxieties surround the propensity of emotional reflexivity to foster over-indulgent academic navel-gazing (see Widdowfield, 2000), it is now widely accepted that emotions are unavoidably part of the 'mess' of research (Humble, 2012):

"XXXX was the first interviewee to actually offer to pray for me, right then and there in the interview, for me and the research. He duly did. I walked out the building afterwards and cried...senior staff at big charities aren't supposed to care!!" Extract from research diary, 30/11/11

My research diary has provided a key space for recording and reflecting on this emotional messiness, reflecting more thoroughly on the intersubjective dynamics of the interviews and on the contribution of my own emotions to the research. Whilst some of it will inevitably have been lost and the rest represented through the lens of my own interpretation and expression (Jones and Ficklin, 2012), this is not something for which I will willingly apologise. Emotions themselves are not objects to be rationalised and subjected to comprehensive 'analysis' (Bondi, 2005); but neither are they antithetical to rationality and critical deconstruction (Cylwik, 2001). They are instead culturally defined and socially produced phenomena that deserve inclusion as valid forms of knowledge and embodied experience (Lupton, 1998; Anderson and Smith, 2001; Wood and Smith, 2004), in ways which remain cognisant of their elusiveness. Emotional experiences can be offered to others in a state of surrender, as part of doing research generously (Diprose, 2001).

Throughout the research process I have tried to centralise an ethic of reflexive openness, of willingness to be changed, embracing the inter-relational dimensions of knowledge production. My own research and personal background will necessarily mean that I conducted the research in certain ways, with some ways of thinking at the forefront of my mind and not others. However, progressive exposure to the world of IDNGOs, and the diverse characters and cultures therein, has necessarily challenged many preconceptions I did not even realise I had. I have allowed this to shape and evolve my research agenda

as I have gone along, keeping the process open, and I hope to continue this project through the subsequent chapters of analysis.

Chapter 5: Exploring the organisational spaces of child sponsorship

5.1 Introduction

I present my research findings from an ethical stance of openness: openness to any number of ways in which charity might exceed the simplistic narratives with which it has to date often been (usually offhandedly) apprehended. Whilst there is no smoke without fire, and this deserves due acknowledgement, as the following three chapters unfold I argue that critical attentiveness is also needed to other diversities and complexities which characterise charitable landscapes. I begin by appraising the *organisational* spaces of child sponsorship, drawing on the critical disruptions made in chapter 2 regarding narratives of IDNGO colonialism, neoliberalism and managerialism. I acknowledge ways in which contemporary IDNGOs do cite and/or conform to these understandings, but also recognise how they exceed them; responding diversely to their parameters and being differentially vulnerable to their pressures. In the process, I also attend to specific dynamics which imbue IDNGOs, issuing from their particular trajectories and positionings, which cannot be thoroughly anticipated or understood with prevailing narratives. Finally, I relate this concern for IDNGO situatedness and complexity to critical debates regarding the ethical and political dynamics of Northern 'charity' work, holding in tension notions of broader 'frameworks', 'regimes' and 'discourses' within which IDNGOs necessarily operate with a more nuanced fidelity to organisational creativity, dynamism and diversity.

As such, the following analysis unfolds through six sections. The first two offer a broader sweep of how sponsorship schemes are set up and communicated to UK publics, recognising common trends and discourses whilst also acknowledging diverse negotiations and practices. The remaining sections organise the IDNGOs in this study according to four thematic axes along which they vary significantly, emergent from the empirical research. These axes-epistemology, scale, positioning and ethos -represent important, under-researched ways in which IDNGOs are diversely situated; proffering new insights with which this key component part of charitable space might be re-mapped.

5.2 Setting up and representing child sponsorship schemes

I begin by exploring how child sponsorship schemes are set up to function as fundraising devices, critiquing their propensity to evoke ethically shallow, consumerist charity marketing trends. I then explore how this use of sponsorship intersects with other key organisational imperatives (including the cultivation of legitimacy, attentiveness to development projects and recipients, neoliberal pressures for 'good governance'). Throughout, I show that IDNGO negotiations of such diverse tasks are framed not only by broader contexts within which they are embedded, but also by the particularities of their individual socio-spatial trajectories. Thus, this discussion contests existing literature by suggesting that IDNGOs respond to the inevitable tensions of their work *diversely*.

5.2.1: Sponsorship's fundraising power

Child sponsorship is traditionally associated with long-term, regular payments from Global North sponsors to support the basic needs of individual children in the Global South, via the managerial efforts of IDNGOs and involving sponsor-child correspondence (stereotypically, letters). At base, these schemes are about fundraising. Whether or not they acquire other layers of meaning, fundraising imperatives remain central to every scheme's setup and representation (the more given current environments of financial turbulence and increased competition).

Sponsorship's fundraising power rests significantly on its marketing potential as a personable, simple, single solution to complex development issues. Supporting an individual child is presented as an easy, enjoyable and effective way to solve the otherwise-overwhelming problems of poverty. It pays IDNGOs to package their projects thus, dependent on appeals to personal responsibility, visual condensations of development into the faces of individual children, and convenient omissions of development's complexity and politics. This rhetorical opportunity also involves taming and erasing myriad complexities present in the schemes. However, these cannot be erased fully, since IDNGOs are under legal, professional and popular pressure to be transparent and, long-term, to develop sponsor commitments in deeper ways than empathetic appeals allow. Furthermore, commitments to recipients generate ethical concerns about

how they are 'used' to attract funds. Thus, the schemes inevitably involve the negotiation of these oft-conflicting imperatives. I approach these themes of negotiation here through the 'personable', 'simple' and 'single' descriptors above, showing how achieving each within sponsorship involves dealing tactically with many other diversities and complexities.

5.2.2 Achieving personability

Despite using powerfully personal rhetoric, few IDNGOs employ a 'direct benefit' model of sponsorship, whereby individual donors support individual children. Whether or not this was ever a practical reality, recent trends in development epistemology towards themes including 'sustainability' and 'community empowerment' have meant many schemes being revised away from 'direct' models, now frequently deemed out-dated and patronising (e.g. Smith, 2004), towards models which pool finances, often (though not always) for community development projects. This move helps IDNGOs by freeing funds from the confines of particular project specifications. However, even these projects retain some personal focus, because of its emotive power. Thus, most contemporary schemes lie somewhere between the two extremes, 'direct' and 'indirect', incorporating elements of both (see Table 5.1). The communication of

Direct?	Middle ground	Indirect?
<p>EXAMPLE: Kindu Trust</p> <p>Of child sponsorship donations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 85% to individual child's involvement in programme. - 15% to administration. <p>Direct benefit to child: fees for school, healthcare, university/vocational training.</p> <p>Complications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 70% of the 85% above goes to child's parent or guardian as cash hand-out, for the entire family's benefit. - If sponsors cancel, children remain in the programme. 	<p>EXAMPLE: Link Ethiopia</p> <p>Of child sponsorship donations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% to child's school - 20% to child. <p>Direct benefit to child: school resources, any further 'educational needs'.</p> <p>Complications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80:20 split is 'on average' and subject to change. - Sponsored children also benefit from school-wide projects, so direct benefit difficult to distinguish from communal benefit. 	<p>EXAMPLE: ActionAid</p> <p>Of child sponsorship donations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 56% to development projects in child's community. - 24% to broader projects in child's country. - 20% to priority activities elsewhere/'UK activities'. <p>Direct benefit to child: none.</p> <p>Complications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A proportion of donations must be spent in the community of which the child is part. - Sponsor-child communication is still encouraged; sponsors are guaranteed bi-annual letters.

Table 5.1: Comparing the setup of different sponsorship schemes.

this complexity presents problems for IDNGOs: the less direct/personal the project seems, the less meaningful the involvement of individual children (and their connection with sponsors) becomes; ‘child sponsorship’ increasingly seems a consumer gimmick overlaying development projects which bear little resemblance (see Figure 5.1). To help ease these tensions, IDNGOs frequently seek to further justify the connection of individual children with sponsors, in both discourse and praxis. Plan UK, for instance, validates this connection as facilitating personal encouragement and learning for both parties, and as an accountability mechanism (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.1: Screenshot from ActionAid website, showing the traditional personal rhetoric of its community development scheme (ActionAid, 2013).



Figure 5.2: Extract from Plan UK graphic 'Things you may not know about sponsorship' (Plan UK, 2013a).

Despite such attempts, however, gaps inevitably exist between the romanticised insinuations made by appeals and the schemes' realities. ActionAid's Head of Supporter Marketing positioned sponsors as bearing with these gaps via a 'cognitive dissonance', being aware of the latter realities but still willing to buy into the former promises, employing a contradictory awareness of their disparity. At IDNGOs

with community-focused schemes (e.g. ActionAid, Plan) this dissonance was valorised as a *productive* tension and legitimate marketing technique; sponsors

are read as appreciating its powerful simplicity, whilst IDNGOs appreciate its unmatched propensity to ‘hook’ in sponsors and sustain a basic level of commitment²³. However, this attitude tends to uncritically position sponsorship as a clever advertising trick, closing down possibilities for it to become more than this. Other IDNGO staff members were more uncomfortable, positioning the dissonance as inevitable but often causing communication difficulties:

“When people get [the way the scheme works], they love it...but it’s some and some. I answered a letter on Monday from a supporter saying ‘I’m no longer going to support you because...we thought the scheme was a one-to-one.’ I actually quoted to them that none of the schemes are one-to-one, and none of the money goes straight to the kids...and I quoted from another organisation’s detail about how in their sponsorship scheme all the money goes to the community. So...I’m not saying we’re whiter than white, because Frances, nothing is whiter than white in this world, but...our information is really clear, and that for some people is a problem.” (CEO, Toybox)

Here, the cognitive dissonance does not stay (un)comfortably with sponsors, but prompts various negotiations and difficulties for staff. Still other staff renounced the dissonance as thoroughly misleading, creating problematic expectations and even a ‘false’ basis for commitment, since *“however transparent we are, people hear the message that they want to hear, and often that doesn’t reflect reality”*²⁴. These interviewees mostly represented more ‘direct’ schemes, where dissonances between appeals and scheme content seem less stark²⁵. The felt tensions emergent from the drive to capitalise on child sponsorship’s personal, accessibly individualistic feel therefore inflect the organisational spaces of IDNGOs differently, depending (not least) on scheme setup.

5.2.3 Achieving simplicity

Just as child sponsorship schemes are rarely as personal as they are portrayed, so neither are they as powerfully simple, translating into complex development projects. For example, Toybox is a medium-sized IDNGO which targets street children in Latin America, pooling sponsorship donations across various indigenous projects in each sponsored child’s geographical region.

²³ ActionAid.

²⁴ UK Officer, Food for the Hungry. Also Grassroots.

²⁵ Interestingly, however, even ‘direct’ schemes cannot escape this dissonance fully. This is because in child sponsorship, the ethical mechanism driving donor commitment is felt responsibility for the child in question; despite the fact that in no scheme (however direct) is this a practical reality.

Rather than involving community development in any stereotypical sense, however, these projects address fluid, complex problems associated with urban child poverty, including drug addiction, family break-ups, human trafficking and abuse, as well as basic needs provision. Long-term, individualist child sponsorship is unworkable in this fluid context, meaning that Toybox has pioneered its own version based around the democratic election of project representatives (see also 5.3.3).

Thus, sponsorship schemes do not always fit a neat epistemological box. Furthermore, as with Toybox, they often connect into indigenous welfare projects. 6 IDNGOs in this study²⁶ use their sponsorship schemes to support such projects, which have their own structures and goals, with the IDNGO's role becoming about fundraising and managerial support, rather than project implementation. 7 other IDNGOs²⁷ disseminate their own projects through local, already-existing organisations (e.g. churches, schools). These practices complicate the 'simple solution' of sponsorship by tempering IDNGO claims of expertise (vital to stake in a neoliberal era (Hilhorst, 2003)) with claims of the expertise of local people. It is not uncommon, therefore, for IDNGOs to extol partners' expertise and trustworthiness alongside assurances that all projects are subject to stringent audits from themselves- just in case²⁸. Such tactics may establish organisational legitimacy but also inflect their discourses with tension and paradox, displaying fragmented fidelities to both neoliberal parameters and postcolonial acknowledgements.

Further attempts to establish the simplicity (and the personable appeal) of sponsorship involve attention being focused on engagements with individual children, often through attractive mechanisms of sponsor choice. Allowing people choice in who they sponsor immediately renders the giving engagement about *this* individual relation, *this* child's face and life, rather than about broader political or socio-economic concepts. However, whilst this might cover over the schemes' complex content, it also creates ethical tensions. Consider the so-called 'photo gallery' technique (Figure 5.3), where prospective sponsors may

²⁶ Child-Link, ChildAid, ICT, Toybox, CRY, Grassroots.

²⁷ Compassion, ACT, Global Care, Kingscare, Link Ethiopia, Grassroots.

²⁸ E.g. Global Care. There are also opportunities here, though, since such setups allow for sponsorship to be marketed using claims of the value of local expertise and bottom-up, indigenous approaches to development that appear less externally invasive.

‘choose’ a specific child from galleries of head-shots of individual children (along with details such as name, age and location). This technique, redolent with possessive connotations, is still widely used, even for schemes where donations are pooled²⁹, challenging any assumption that ‘direct’ schemes have a monopoly on ethically problematic marketing techniques. Its use was decried by other staff as abusive of children, and as enticing giving based on ‘problematic’ motivations (e.g. based on the child’s looks)³⁰. Others, however, defended the approach as allowing a wider array of generous promptings and identifications than textual appeals. Cited, for instance, was the appeal of being able to choose a child of similar age and gender to one’s own child(ren), to increase the educational potentials of sponsorship for donor families³¹.

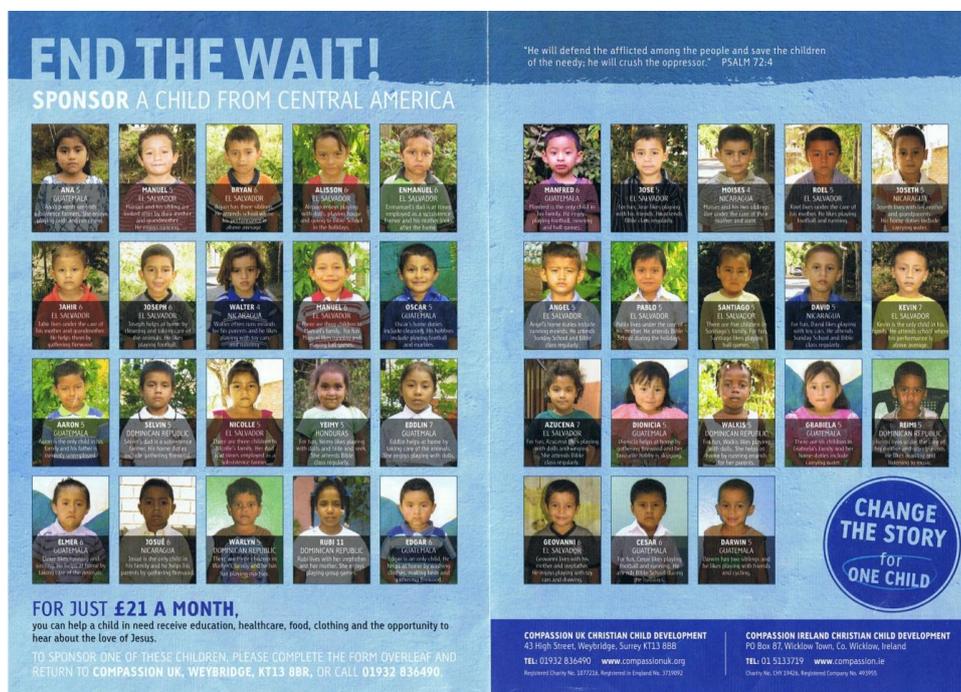


Figure 5.3: Compassion leaflet using the ‘photo gallery’ technique, published 2010.

Despite this talk of cross-cultural education, however, the schema of sponsor choice still smacks of consumer charity, with development recipients being subservient to donor desires. Furthermore, many IDNGOs which condemn the photo gallery approach indirectly endorse similarly possessive themes. World Vision’s website allows prospective sponsors to ‘search’ the World Vision database for ‘your child’ using specifications of age, gender, continent and country, within seconds returning the details of a child fitting this

²⁹ Child-Link, Project Mala.

³⁰ ICT, ActionAid and Grassroots.

³¹ Compassion.

prescription³². Viewers are greeted with 'Liza' or 'Barbra', each of whom is 'waiting for a World Vision sponsor'. This exhibits elements of the 'photo gallery' approach without actually using it, reproducing problematic themes through categories of choice, and through narratives of recipients passively waiting for the salvation of sponsorship. This is despite World Vision's scheme being community development-based, including children in projects regardless of whether or not they are officially 'sponsored'.

A related tactic involves incorporating sponsor choice into the price of sponsorship. Whilst most IDNGOs offer sponsorship at a flat monthly rate, two IDNGOs stand out from this, officially incorporating different pricing arrangements. At Grassroots, this tactic is positioned as about transparency regarding project diversity: prices vary because project costs vary. Whilst (by staff admission) this strategy makes sponsorship accessible to sponsors of a far greater socio-economic diversity, it seemingly treads dangerously close to consumer 'price plans'. Similarly, at Project Mala, sponsorship costs between £9 and £25 monthly depending on the child's age, despite donations being pooled rather than directly benefiting specific children.

Such schemas of sponsor choice tread a fine line, risking IDNGO responsiveness to (and respectful involvement of) recipients for the financial gain of a consumer-friendly device. Inevitably, ethical lines must be drawn to manage the various interests and expectations involved here, whether in day-to-day conversations between staff and sponsors, whereby staff members judge the reasonability of sponsor behaviour and expectations, or in policy and management surrounding sponsor-child correspondence. For instance, not all IDNGOs allow direct sponsor-child correspondence, instead promising regular updates³³. Those which allow communication often do not guarantee it, refusing to force children to write³⁴.

Furthermore, most IDNGOs offer suggestions about what is and is not appropriate to include in communication (though these vary), and have a

³² <http://www.worldvision.org.uk/child-sponsorship/>, accessed 29/07/13.

³³ E.g. Project Mala.

³⁴ E.g. CRY, Toybox, SOS. An exception is Compassion, where epistemological and ethical valorisations of personal relationships undergird the strong discursive promotion of sponsor-child connections and the guarantee of bi-annual communication from sponsored children.

system for filtering out communication deemed inappropriate or harmful. These layers of management are also visible in the resources with which sponsors are furnished for letter-writing (e.g. Figure 5.4). Clearly, therefore, whilst the connection might be marketed as transformational for both sponsor and child, significant organisational concern exists to manage its nature and content. This poses questions about the potential of sponsor-child engagements to foster more open-ended encounters, placing them firmly within institutional narratives and structures.

In sum, achieving sponsorship's simple, personable connotations often prompts tensions between fundraising drives, epistemological concerns, ethical commitments and neoliberal pressures, further imbuing IDNGO spaces with senses of contradiction and difficulty. Crucially, however, the diverse negotiations apparent here testify to the uneven inflection of these negotiations within organisational space, such that pigeon-holing the schemes, analytically or normatively, is impossible.

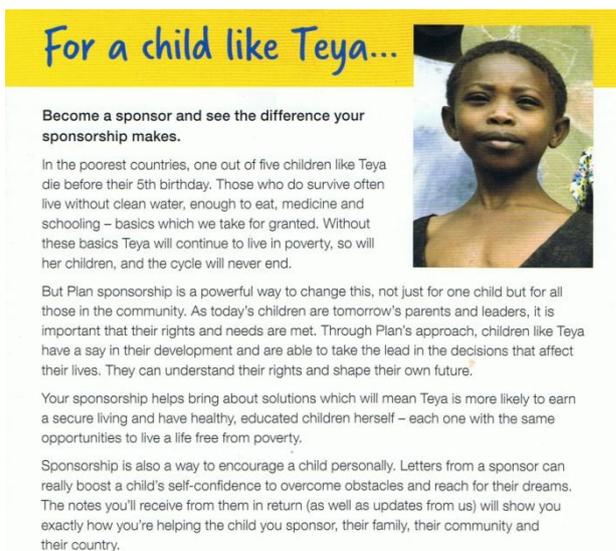
5.2.4 Achieving singularity

Finally, rarely are sponsorship schemes as *singular* as they first appear. 14 IDNGOs (of 20) in this study apply their schemes across several different contexts, ranging from three or four projects to hundreds. As these projects undoubtedly vary, a key tension emerges for IDNGOs between the communication of this variation and the universal power of 'sponsorship'. As in

Figure 5.4: Plan sponsor template for letter-writing, published 2012.

previous discussion, the way this is negotiated depends particularly on scheme setup. For instance, Plan and ActionAid, which run hundreds of large-scale community development projects, avoid concretely delineating their schemes' diversities, emphasising instead the emotive singular solution of sponsorship. They remain conveniently vague regarding project content, relying on generalisations or list-based narratives of what projects *may* include:

"Your donations help a whole community through funding projects such as building schools, digging wells and providing vaccinations." (Plan UK website³⁵)



For a child like Teya...

Become a sponsor and see the difference your sponsorship makes.

In the poorest countries, one out of five children like Teya die before their 5th birthday. Those who do survive often live without clean water, enough to eat, medicine and schooling – basics which we take for granted. Without these basics Teya will continue to live in poverty, so will her children, and the cycle will never end.

But Plan sponsorship is a powerful way to change this, not just for one child but for all those in the community. As today's children are tomorrow's parents and leaders, it is important that their rights and needs are met. Through Plan's approach, children like Teya have a say in their development and are able to take the lead in the decisions that affect their lives. They can understand their rights and shape their own future.

Your sponsorship helps bring about solutions which will mean Teya is more likely to earn a secure living and have healthy, educated children herself – each one with the same opportunities to live a life free from poverty.

Sponsorship is also a way to encourage a child personally. Letters from a sponsor can really boost a child's self-confidence to overcome obstacles and reach for their dreams. The notes you'll receive from them in return (as well as updates from us) will show you exactly how you're helping the child you sponsor, their family, their community and their country.

"The projects we work on might include wells to provide clean water and stop fatal diseases...Child sponsorship could help a community to build a school or pay a teachers' wages...Or perhaps your donation might buy a child's parents seeds..." (ActionAid UK website³⁶)

The grounding of these lists in case studies and testimonials alludes to specificity, but often remains similarly evasive. Plan's example of 'Teya' in Figure 5.5 demonstrates this well, as a 'case study' with no specific details about 'Teya' or her family, relying instead on visual connotations and universalist narratives about 'sponsorship' and 'poverty'. It shows a tension between communicating complexity whilst retaining the power of a universalist vision, a balance which strikes to the very heart of 'development' (Smith, 2004).



Figure 5.5: Plan promotion (2012). No photographic attributions are given. The reverse reads "Some names have been changed for confidentiality."

³⁵ www.plan-uk.org/sponsor-a-child/, accessed 27/07/13.

³⁶ <http://www.actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child/frequently-asked-questions>, accessed 27/07/13.

IDNGOs which embrace more traditional epistemological models of sponsorship arguably have an easier time negotiating scheme variation, subsuming this within a broader, mobile development framework. Some apply a core list of provisions across all their projects (whilst carefully noting how their schemes are not 'one-size-fits-all')³⁷, whilst others utilise scheme variation as an important selling point, with connotations of responsiveness, flexibility and transparency (see Figure 5.6).

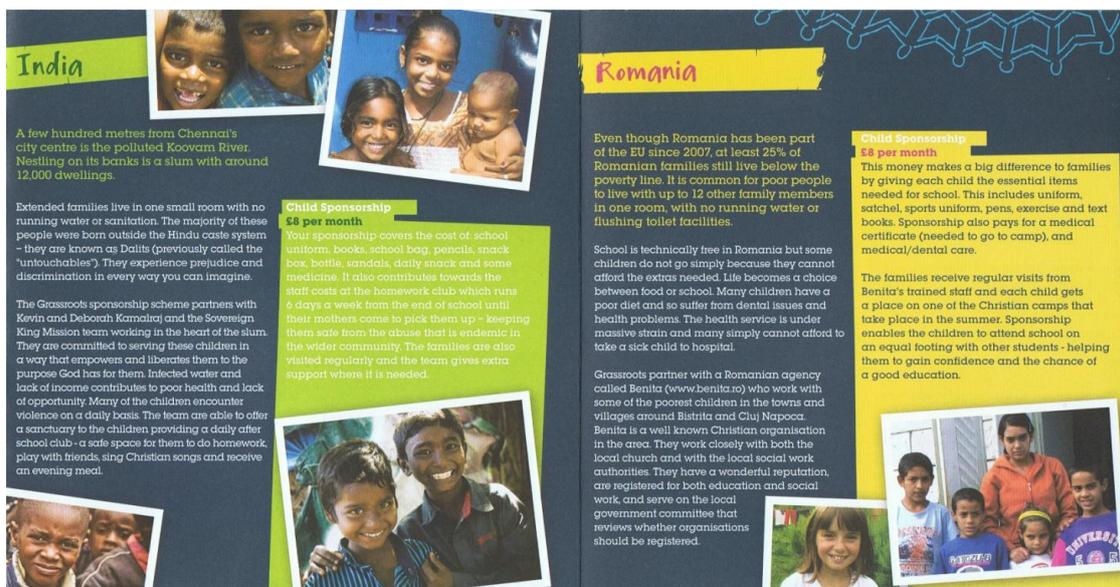


Figure 5.6: Grassroots sponsorship leaflet (2012) emphasising project diversity.

5.2.5 Understanding these diverse negotiations

The careful management of sponsorship as a personable, simple, single solution seemingly affirms its appearance as a service delivery development device, hinging on appeals to sponsor choice and sovereignty and its consumer-friendly, 'bespoke' packaging. This not only positions sponsorship as easily co-opted into the merger between neoliberalism and development, but also affirms allegations that the schemes rely on problematic, colonial ways of thinking the world (e.g. homogenised imaginaries of need and Western salvation, schemas of patronage, and assumptions about the goods of Westernised discursive infrastructures such as basic needs, human rights).

These clear trends are, however, also complicated by the schemes' practical setup, stimulating diverse negotiations involving different types of erasure and admission. These negotiations are framed by staff attitudes, which display different kinds of commitment to sponsorship. Whilst almost all staff

³⁷ E.g. Global Care, Compassion.

valorised sponsorship for its generation of long-term financial commitments from donors, narrating this as security in tough economic times and reliability of income for long-term development plans³⁸, some were more committed to its epistemological virtues than others. Some IDNGOs, for instance, mobilise sponsorship as an effective development solution, implemented dually as a development model and a fundraising device³⁹; their staff unsurprisingly exhibit strong loyalty to their schemes, but varying levels of concern for sponsor experiences. Conversely, other IDNGO staff (usually representing communal schemes) narrated sponsorship more as a fundraiser, with clear reservations about its potential as a development model, but every concern for sponsor experiences⁴⁰.

Given this diverse reasoning underlying sponsorship's mobilisation, it is unsurprising that staff views on the sponsor-child connection are also diverse. Several interviewees adamantly proclaimed its intrinsic value, whether in terms of relational care (i.e. love, encouragement, etc), education or transparency. Others stated that the sponsor-child connection cannot be centralised too much, lest it overexposes them to donor whims⁴¹. Indeed, it was sometimes decried as mere hassle, being too administratively cumbersome⁴², citing the popular argument of resource-wasting often levelled at sponsorship schemes. At Grassroots, staff were frank about the limitations of sponsor-child 'relationships', even expressing a wish for less sponsors who wanted to communicate with sponsored children, for both administrative and ethical reasons. Given that the Grassroots scheme is devotedly direct benefit, this response disturbs the assumption that schemes with a more individualistic focus are necessarily quick to embrace consumer-friendly, possessive-seeming approaches.

Thus, the setup and representation of child sponsorship, and the negotiations which imbue this, vary considerably depending on epistemological approach, producing a surprising diversity of responses. These (whilst

³⁸ This value of sponsorship for prompting and sustaining giving was unfailingly traced back to the power of using individual children, in promotions and as part of the device³⁸, whether or not the schemes contain any element of direct benefit. Burman (1994) and Manzo (2008) both testify to the psychological power of faces of individual children in humanitarian appeals, as part of a broader commodification of Western notions of childhood.

³⁹ Kindu Trust, ACE, Compassion, CRY, Grassroots, Toybox.

⁴⁰ ActionAid, Plan.

⁴¹ Child-Link, Grassroots, CRY, Mala, Kindu.

⁴² Child-Link, ChildAid, Food for the Hungry.

confirming conceptual understandings of IDNGOs as suffused with tension) muddy designations of IDNGOs as neoliberal ‘platoons’, and as intrinsically colonial, leaving no room for other voices or approaches. Instead, IDNGOs appear to strike fine balances between many conflicting concerns, in ways which are shaped strongly by their epistemological approach and *a/so* by other ethical questions, relational negotiations, and senses of confusion which cannot be read off organisational structure or broader discursive/epistemological trends. Their simple conformity to labels such as ‘neoliberal’ or ‘colonial’ therefore cannot be assumed. Subsequent discussion approaches these arguments by looking further at the rhetoric used in sponsorship promotions. I explore how this rhetoric conforms to existing critiques of aid discourses as problematically reliant on long-standing tropes of Western superiority and privilege, whilst suggesting ways in which it deserves vital supplementation.

5.3 Communicating child sponsorship

Sponsorship rhetoric is not simply about communicating the schemes; it is also about communicating broader themes like poverty and charity- the needscape (see chapter 2) which legitimises sponsorship interventions and configures generous responses. Existing work (e.g. Smith, 2004) suggests that these promotional negotiations display visible contradictions, stemming from the conflicting imperatives IDNGOs face. I begin here by examining how such contradictions are visible in sponsorship promotions, as per Smith’s argument, particularly in attempts to condense complex development issues into powerfully simple messages (see previous discussion) and in mobilisations of distinctly positive imagery. I then unsettle this narrative by suggesting that said contradictions are experienced and negotiated diversely.

5.3.1 Child sponsorship promotional rhetoric: simple messages

Most sponsorship schemes are presented as addressing issues surrounding ‘poverty’ and ‘deprivation’. Generic references to ‘poverty’, ‘poor countries’ and ‘poor people’ are prevalent across the representational materials of all IDNGOs in this study. As illustrated previously, these references are often vague regarding the complexities of development, confirming Wallace’s (1997:

39, in Smith, 2004) point that in navigating between neoliberal service delivery emphases and more politically complex approaches, IDNGOs often employ a “*homogenized language and concepts which are often used in widely different contexts without definition.*” These buzzwords centre on indications of lack:

“In the poorest countries, one out of five children...die before their 5th birthday. Those who do survive often live without clean water, enough to eat, medicine and schooling- basics which we take for granted. Without these basics...the [poverty] cycle will never end.” (Plan leaflet, 2012)

These lacks, as the above quote shows, are commonly summated using trans-context terms that reference notions of basic needs and human rights. They are also often shrouded in more moralised, empathy-centred tones:

“Who do we help? Families on the brink of collapse, orphans deprived of hope and love, disabled children forgotten and alone. What do we do? Bring security, empower children and young people, educate and train, offer free therapies, provide loving homes, deliver social welfare, [and] above all else, cultivate spiritual well-being.” (ChildAid website⁴³)

Such rhetorical tactics may be powerful fundraising techniques, but seemingly reproduce long-standing developmental trends of patronage, de-politicisation and disempowerment by mobilising universalist, romanticised imaginaries dependent on appeals to Western ‘power to save’. Additionally, and similarly, an equally homogenised narrative used by many IDNGOs is that of ‘transformation’- transforming lives, worlds, situations. Again, the nature of this transformation remains vague, an assumed good with its connotations of whole-scale positive change:

“Sponsoring a child will not only help change the life of one child, but will help transform a whole community.” (Plan leaflet, 2012)

“Transform a child in Jesus’ name and you begin to change the world.”
(Compassion leaflet, 2012)

This trope connects strongly with ideals of ‘progress’ and ‘improvement’ associated with the ‘white man’s burden’ to bring civilising change (Stirrat, 2008). Thus, whilst narratives of transformation signify the potentials of aid, legitimising charitable responses, they seemingly contradict commitments to empower recipients.

⁴³ <http://www.childaidrr.org.uk/2>, accessed 29/07/13.

They also subtly reference the ‘missionary’ development stereotype, showing that long-standing interconnections between development and religion (see 2.5.1) are subtly present in contemporary IDNGOs regardless of faith affiliation. Furthermore, specifically Christian discourses bolster narratives of transformation with references less broadly absorbed into the lexicon of development discourse- references which carry similarly across context, undergirded by the authority of Scripture. For instance, citations abound (see Figure 5.7) of the Bible verse Jeremiah 29:11, a popular verse amongst Christians which promises a bright, better future:

“For I know the plans I have for you’, declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)



Figure 5.7: Toybox promotion (2012), with verse reference, bottom right.

These discourses are, almost without fail, structured around appeals to individual donor agency- ‘you can make a difference’, ‘transform his/her life’ - rendering the IDNGO either invisible or responsible for service delivery. Such tactics may raise funds, but rely on problematic, individualistic appeals to personal responsibility, and contradictory claims and denials of IDNGO agency. These tropes not only underscore neoliberal trends towards consumer-oriented charity, but also gesture towards deep epistemological challenges currently facing the development sector (see Smith, 2004), forcing IDNGOs into a difficult position where their professional authority must be established and developmental visions defended, whilst denying their right to exclusively narrate the way forward. So far, therefore, the simplistic messages which sponsorship promotions mobilise seemingly affirm critiques of aid discourses as dependent on ethically problematic imaginaries, languages and appeals to responsibility,

the use of which inevitably results in their ‘public faces’ (Smith, 2004) becoming suffused with tension and contradiction.

5.3.2 Promotional rhetoric: positive imagery

As well as simplistic messages, sponsorship promotions are overwhelmingly characterised by *positive* imagery. In line with critiques since the 1980s of graphic depictions of suffering in aid appeals (see 2.2.3), overt signs of suffering are absent- no swollen bellies or crying babies. Subjects are mostly shown smiling, dressed in clean clothes and looking healthy, engaged in ‘normal’ childhood activities- carrying schoolbooks or playing games (e.g. Figure 5.8).

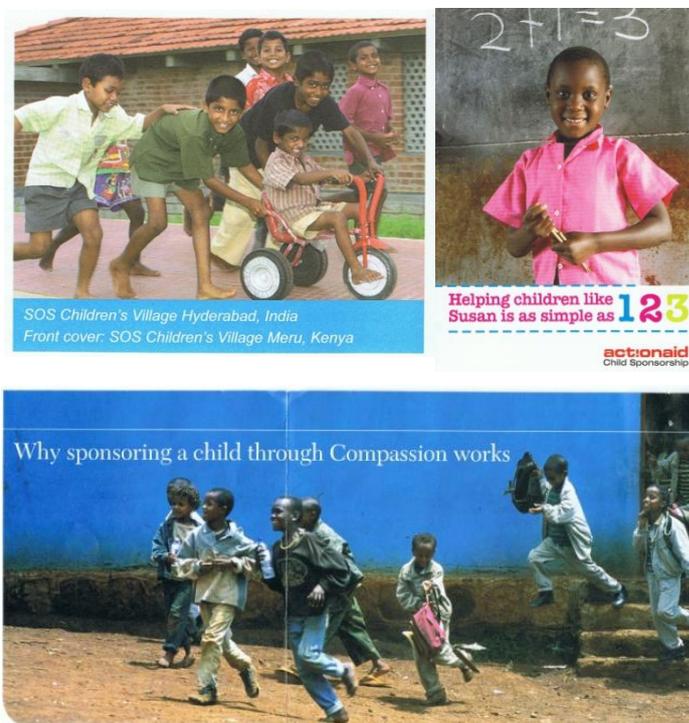


Figure 5.8: Selection of typical promotional images.
Top left: SOS. Top right: ActionAid. Bottom:
Compassion. All published 2012.

This approach was re-iterated by staff members, who distanced themselves from graphically ‘negative’ fundraising imagery:

“There was a real mood across all the development charities to play the pity card, around about the LiveAid time...there was this sense that we show a child, a starving child or a child with a distended stomach...I hope we’ve come away from that, although like a lot of others, we’ve done that.” (Head of Communications, Global Care)

The problem with positive imagery is that it inversely references imaginaries of need and Western agency by forming the ‘after’ pictures of aid, depicting the fair fruits of charity. Furthermore, allusions to ‘lack’ are still subtly visible. Cross-cutting the IDNGOs in this study, for instance, was the enduringly powerful ‘lone child’ image, which transmits patronising connotations by symbolically standing in for the Global South, whether suffering or smiling (Manzo, 2008; see also 2.2.2). In sponsorship appeals, broader relational contexts are often mentioned textually but rarely depicted visually,

subtly connoting that these children are alone but for sponsor interventions⁴⁴. Staff members and development workers also rarely appear; text usually speaks singularly of the IDNGO. This obscures the aid chain, reifying sponsor agency and fetishising the sponsorship device.

Stereotypical signs of ‘poverty’ are also widely used. For instance, smiling, active children are often dressed in rags and surrounded by stereotypical ‘mud hut’ settings (e.g. Figure 5.9); or near buildings showing some external sign of decay, or peering through windows or fences in ways that signify entrapment (Figure 5.10). The message here is clear- poverty is an environmental shackle on young lives. This avoids problematic rhetoric of personal conversion, and sidesteps direct images of suffering, but also avoids acknowledging poverty as political, removing the need for reflection on complexity or complicity. This combination of ‘positive’ imagery with subtle stereotypes demonstrates a key post-LiveAid tension being experienced by IDNGOs: avoiding the ethical difficulties of ‘negative’ imagery whilst retaining its emotive power. The results, as shown here, tend to reproduce the same tropes, albeit more subtly.

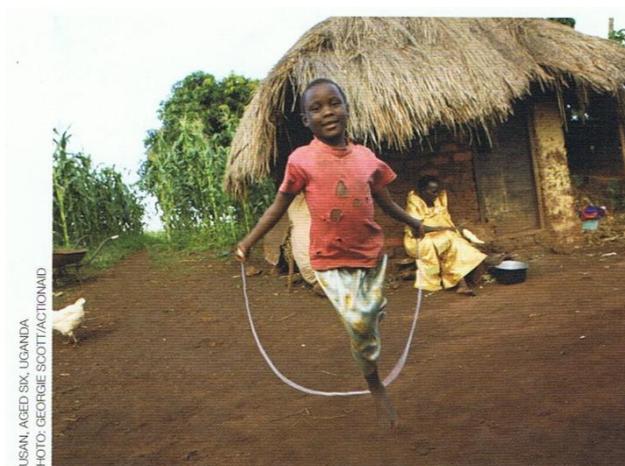


Figure 5.9: Image from ActionAid sponsorship leaflet (2012).

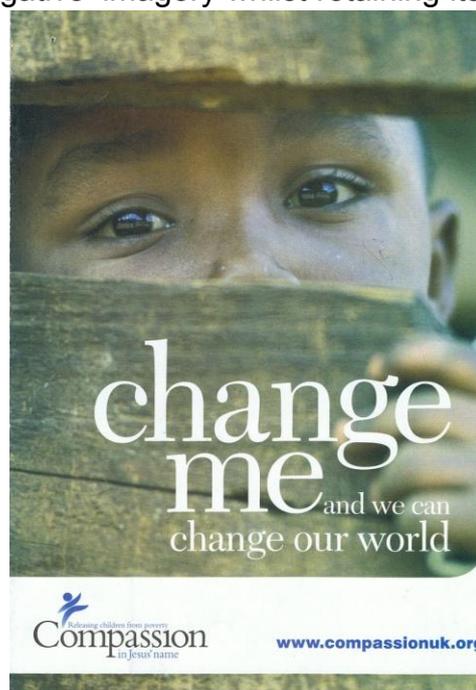


Figure 5.10: Compassion promotion, published 2010.

5.3.3 Diverse negotiations and responses

⁴⁴ An exception is provided by SOS, whose scheme involves putting orphaned or abandoned children in small care homes with house ‘mothers’. SOS imagery includes a mixture of ‘lone child’ images and shots of happy families, complicating appeals to donor agency and responsibility.

Sponsorship promotions are seemingly awash with tension; supporting the claims of existing literature that contradictions present within IDNGOs are publicly visible (e.g. Smith, 2004). However, also important are the *diverse* ways in which these tensions are negotiated. For instance, stereotypical discourses of need and transformation are often accompanied by contradictory moves *away* from vocabularies of patronage. Some IDNGOs re-narrate letters between sponsors and children as ‘messages’⁴⁵, asking sponsors to refer to themselves as ‘friends’⁴⁶. Toybox sponsored children are re-labelled ‘Child Ambassadors’, and this seemingly represents more than rhetorical tactics since Ambassadors are elected by their peers (children within the same project) to not only represent their project to sponsors, but also partake in campaigns and lobbying (supported by Toybox) to government on behalf of street children. In Guatemala, this led to the Child Ambassadors being awarded the national ‘Rose of Peace’ award in 2009 for contribution to peaceful society. Whilst not all IDNGOs seek to integrate anti-colonial rhetoric with praxis in such a politically committed way, it is nonetheless interesting that diverse attempts are appearing to better navigate sponsorship’s ethical issues whilst retaining its key tenets⁴⁷.

Furthermore, the use of overtly ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ rhetoric was met with diverse responses from staff. Some expressed unease at erring towards positivism:

“Now we do get criticised, some people say that it's all a bit smiley...we had a gala dinner recently, and somebody said to me, 'it was great, but I'm not sure it was hard-hitting enough...maybe you should have done more of, you know, kids begging on the dump.' And I said 'Sure, sure. Maybe we should have done.' What can I say, you know?” (CEO, Toybox)

Others, less concerned about the difficulties of this balance, deemed their use of stereotypically negative representations justifiable in the context of uncompromising ethics in the field.

“I won't deny, we've tugged at heartstrings, we've used kids to tug at heartstrings! [Laughs] But it's not a case of 'that's a nice picture, we'll use that to get some donors, but it's nothing to do with that kid and it's nothing to do with us really'; they are kids that we've taken on and we are committed to.” (Head of Donor Relations, Global Care)

⁴⁵ ActionAid, Plan UK.

⁴⁶ CRY.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, Toybox’s scheme was pioneered by two visionary staff members, showing how individual people can often form engines for corporate change.

At ActionAid, stereotypically negative representations were labelled 'low integrity' by the Head of Supporter Marketing; and disdainfully labelled out-dated, with no place in the organisation's current repertoire of rights-based development and social justice campaigning. She then admitted, somewhat contradictorily, that ActionAid still uses such imagery because of its emotive power, aiming it particularly at 'Dorothy donors'⁴⁸ - elderly, conservative, middle class, female donors who trust ActionAid uncritically. This represents an interesting response to internal organisational tension: presenting different organisational 'faces' depending on assumptions about the characteristic responses of different audiences. The general move towards 'building Northern constituencies' (Smith, 2004; Baillie Smith, 2008) seems to be highly selective, with different constituency groups labelled with different uses and therefore being approached differently.

In other IDNGOs, navigating between 'positive' and 'negative' imagery was not an 'either/or' decision depending on the audience, but 'both/and', out of a realist dedication to depicting the 'true' situation: need *and* hope, difficulty *and* potential⁴⁹. This narrative is also integrated into marketing policy; the following extract from Compassion's 'Implementing the Compassion Brand' handbook speaks to its professional photographers:

"While we believe in being honest about the challenges that children face, we always seek to portray them in ways that show hope and the promise of a positive future...need is an extremely important quality to show through photography (if there is no need then why sponsor a child?) Need...can be shown through a child's expression, the way a child is dressed or groomed, and the context that a child is shown in...It is not inappropriate to show a happy child, but care needs to be taken in showing the correct context."

Weaving through these various narratives are mixtures of financial imperatives, ethical commitments and varying levels of exposure to debates about aid imagery (popular, professional, academic). Some IDNGO staff had clearly never thought strategically about representational techniques⁵⁰; others were keenly aware⁵¹. This diversity emphasises that IDNGOs are positioned differently with regard to broader professional debates and epistemological shifts.

⁴⁸ Head of Supporter Marketing.

⁴⁹ Fields of Life, Toybox.

⁵⁰ ACE, ACT, Project Mala.

⁵¹ Plan, ActionAid.

5.3.4 Section conclusions

Most sponsorship promotions seemingly justify traditional ‘colonial’ allegations levelled at aid discourses (see 2.2.3), whether by deploying stereotypically negative imagery, apolitical terminology or contradictory accounts testifying to broader epistemological uncertainties. Sponsorship’s central pillar- individual donors engaging charitably with individual children –is very difficult to communicate without appealing to parental responsibility *for* children, Western-centric notions of agency and expertise (etc). ‘Positive’ imagery does not necessarily overcome these difficulties, reproducing them more subtly, or inversely.

However, diverse responses are nonetheless evident, often involving strong ethical convictions and politicised agendas un-swayed by financial imperatives, deliberately responding to external criticisms and seeking to represent sponsorship more ethically. There are, therefore, signs of hope that postcolonial critiques often fail to recognise. Finally, IDNGO staff members evidently perceive, experience and approach representational debates diversely. These diversities suggest that IDNGOs are positioned and equipped differently regarding common pressures and tensions. The remainder of this chapter seeks to apprehend how and why this might be, exploring four important factors that existing literature fails to adequately acknowledge. These are variations in epistemological approach, organisational scale, positioning and ethos. Whilst other factors are undoubtedly relevant (subsequently highlighted, for instance, are the specific trajectories of each IDNGO), these four interrelated axes of diversity emerged empirically as important, and therefore structure the remaining discussion.

5.4 Epistemological variations

The content of contemporary sponsorship schemes varies widely, as IDNGOs variously respond to broader critiques of ‘stereotypical’ development appeals (see 2.2.3; 5.1), attend to the specificities of their projects, and seek to foster more ‘progressive’ (i.e. critical, open, self-disruptive) dialogue with donors; all whilst attempting to retain sponsorship’s fundraising potency. This

section explores how the resultant variations shape organisational space. In this project, a spectrum from 'direct benefit' schemes (appearing to epitomise traditional charity) to 'community development' schemes (suggesting more progressive movements) might seem helpful. However, given the ways in which these designations and their ethical associations might be complicated (see 5.1), more helpful is a simple recognition (without ethical presumption) that some schemes hold in significant ways to stereotypical notions of direct, individualist child sponsorship, whilst others depart significantly from this in practice (though not necessarily in discourse).

Here, I deal with these latter departures first and more traditional schemes second, arguing that these epistemological variations shape IDNGO experiences of the sorts of organisational tasks identified by Lewis (2003), Smith (2004) and so on. In turn, this produces diverse negotiations regarding how sponsorship is communicated to Global North publics. This not only helps explain the contemporary dynamics of sponsorship schemes; it also sheds light on their potential to mobilise Global North constituencies for more radical development projects.

5.4.1 Movements away from traditional child sponsorship: progressive?

Child sponsorship schemes which are not 'direct benefit' have become increasingly popular since the 1970s. They are commonly deemed more effective, more appropriate development, sidestepping pitfalls of patronage and division in recipient communities. Thus, sponsorship money might contribute to 'community development' projects, for instance, or be shared across a school or orphanage. As explained previously, despite seeming more empowering, these various setups risk their 'child sponsorship' becoming at best gimmicky, at worst misleading; and certainly less coherent than 'direct benefit' schemes, where 'child sponsorship' corresponds to some tangible benefit to the child.

These disparities are managed somewhat by legal frameworks which hold IDNGOs to their promotional claims, restricting money enticed under the auspices of sponsorship to promises made in promotions (Institute of Fundraising, 2013). Thus, 80% of each ActionAid sponsorship donation goes to the sponsored child's *country*. At the time of interview, 70% of that 80% (56p in every £1) is restricted to the child's community, the rest going to broader work in

that country (though sponsors are not readily informed of this latter breakdown). These legal restrictions seemingly counter more flexible approaches to development, confining even less 'direct' programmes to a pre-assigned set of parameters. Approaches (and loopholes) are constantly sought, therefore, which allow the further 'de-restriction' of funds, whilst still capitalising on sponsorship's claims⁵².

A difficult marketing task thus remains of retaining sponsorship's lucrative individualistic feel whilst avoiding connotations of patronage, escaping service-delivery constraints, and deploying very different development agendas in the field. As I was told at ActionAid: "*it is very hard to package a rights-based agenda in sponsorship form*"⁵³. Management of these dissonances includes attempts to bridge them by, for instance, involving sponsored children in some empowering project, further justifying each individual sponsorship. The example of Toybox in section 5.3.3 demonstrates this cogently. At ActionAid, sponsored children are designated community representatives and involved in decision-making processes, since "*good sponsorship should engage the child and not be a gimmick...sponsorship is very hard to justify if the kids have no role*"⁵⁴.

As well as seeking to integrate the traditional, more possessive-seeming tenets of sponsorship with more 'progressive' ideals of 'empowerment' and 'rights', efforts also exist (even within the same IDNGOs) to obscure rights-based agendas. At ActionAid, 'Dorothy donors' are targeted with 'low integrity' appeals which contradict ActionAid's rights-based approach (see 5.3.3), showing different demographic and social groups being assigned particular organisational tasks (e.g. 'Dorothy donors' becoming associated with easy fundraising; ActionAid also targets young people with lobbying opportunities), such that opportunities for deeper, politicised engagements are aimed selectively. This selectivity, and the problematic assumptions on which it rests, testify to ActionAid's large marketing budget and advanced database. Whilst this does not preclude similar logics being employed on a smaller scale, ActionAid's systematic approach is not available to most IDNGOs, showing that scale is an important factor as regards this particular tactic.

⁵² Head of Supporter Marketing.

⁵³ Learning and Projects Co-ordinator, ActionAid International.

⁵⁴ Head of Supporter Marketing.

Attempts to manage the gaps between sponsorship rhetoric and project content are not, it bears saying, always successful. In 2010, a complaint was made to the Advertising Standards Agency about a ‘misleading’ Plan sponsorship advert. In its wake, a round-table involving 5 UK sponsorship IDNGOs produced the ‘Child Sponsorship Charter’, a code of good practice for sponsorship promotions (see Appendix D). This inter-organisational attempt to govern sponsorship’s incoherencies is still selective, however, involving only the biggest UK sponsorship IDNGOs, suggesting that smaller organisations with similar schemes do not move in the same professional circles. Moreover, it only involves IDNGOs with ‘indirect’ schemes, reflecting the contemporary refuting of ‘direct benefit’ approaches in professional debates regarding ‘progressive’ child sponsorship.

In sum, schemes which depart practically from sponsorship’s traditional tenets necessarily face difficult negotiations, not least as they balance support-raising imperatives with commitments to recipients. Importantly, existing literature often fails to recognise the diverse ways in which these tensions are negotiated, as well as how IDNGO responses are shaped by other factors (e.g. scale).

5.4.2 ‘Direct benefit’ schemes

In general, such tensions are less visible within schemes embracing some element of ‘direct benefit’, since the felt gaps between promotional discourse and praxis are smaller. However, whilst this eases some difficult contradictions (e.g. between fundraising drives and development agendas), it worsens others; not least ethical allegations regarding the favouring of individual children and the re-embedding of relations of patronage. Furthermore, since direct benefit approaches are currently decried professionally as ‘bad’ development, IDNGOs employing such approaches are increasingly pressured to justify their work, with promotions often subtly testifying to this:

“Our ministry directly engages each child as a complete person...children have the opportunity to flourish and grow into their God-given potential...Our program breaks down the immense barriers that children in poverty face by addressing the ‘big picture’ of one child’s life” (Compassion promotion, 2012)

Often these justifications involve showing how direct benefit gifts also help the wider community:

"It is these educated and empowered individuals who go on to change the communities they live in for the better." (Compassion booklet, 2012)

These negotiations are shaped by organisational size: the larger IDNGOs grow, the more formalised their epistemological justifications need to become. Compassion, for instance, presents its approach as a universal model⁵⁵. In contrast, smaller IDNGOs can capitalise on having flexible schemes that function on a case-by-case basis.

Schemes with an element of direct benefit therefore seem more vulnerable to tensions between fundraising imperatives and ethical commitments to recipients. However, many IDNGOs employing direct benefit approaches did not acknowledge any awareness of their associated difficulties, either at interview or in their publications. This is partly because most are small and far removed from professional debates about aid epistemologies and representational techniques. More factors govern the contemporary diversity of sponsorship IDNGOs than simply epistemology, therefore; scale and organisational positioning also play a part.

5.4.3 Section conclusions: how epistemological variations impact donor involvements

Depending how sponsorship schemes are approached epistemologically, internal organisational imperatives are both experienced and negotiated diversely. This troubles assumptions that all sponsorship schemes conform to similar ethico-political parameters and suffer equally from the same managerial tensions, thereby unsettling assumptions that the schemes necessarily reproduce similar power relations. In the context of professional and academic pressures for the deeper engagement of Northern development constituents (whether in terms of dialogue, debate, politicisation, etc), it is important to note that these epistemological variations also impact how donors are approached, framing the political potential of their involvements. In indirect schemes, sponsorship can tend towards a simple fundraiser, dressed up with rhetorical commitments to individual children. It then becomes easier to regard donors instrumentally, and sponsorship cynically rather than as a platform for developing more inspirational engagements with development issues.

⁵⁵ See <http://www.compassionmodel.org/>, accessed 02/08/13.

ActionAid and Plan, for instance, both run schemes which translate practically into community development. Both are large, influential organisations at the forefront of sector debates about 'best practice'; both send sponsors quarterly magazines aimed at development education, seeking to engage them further. Despite this, however, both IDNGOs frame this drive for 'education' as, long-term, about strengthening sponsor financial commitments. In other words, it remains subservient to the imperative to raise funds (see also Desforges, 2004). Furthermore, both IDNGOs regard sponsorship as a fixed product, which donors can take or leave, rather than allowing space for critique or creative exploration. Thus, sponsorship remains a means to an end, rather than an intrinsic opportunity for opening out more radical approaches.

IDNGOs with schemes which depart from sponsorship's traditional tenets in favour of more 'empowering' approaches actually seem, therefore, more likely to regard sponsor involvements narrowly (though this will not be the case uniformly). This does not mean that more 'direct' schemes are more likely to foster open-ended dialogue, though some do. Indeed, these seem more likely to struggle with enthusiastic supporters who claim too much responsibility over their sponsored child⁵⁶. Instead, I am suggesting that the further sponsorship schemes get practically from their promotional rhetoric, the less seriously they are likely to be taken as vehicles through which to build more empowering, dialogic approaches to development within Northern constituencies. Such potentials and constraints are not only shaped by epistemological approach, however. Another important factor mentioned so far is organisational scale, to which I now turn.

5.5 Size matters: the organisational differential of scale

The scalar polarisation of Third Sector organisations is an acknowledged but little researched trend (e.g. Milligan, 2007; see also 2.3.5). As a very broad indicator, the graph in Figure 5.11 plots the 125 UK child sponsorship IDNGOs I have found according to annual net income, showing evident polarisation. I discuss here how such trends configure organisational space, diversifying IDNGO experiences of fundraising imperatives and key external pressures (I

⁵⁶ E.g. Compassion.

centralise competition and aspects of neoliberal governance here). Throughout, I show that associations between small-scale activity and independence from neoliberal agendas, and between large-scale activity and corporatised neoliberalism (see 2.3.5), deserve critical complication.

I refer throughout to ‘large’ and ‘small’ IDNGOs to acknowledge the above bifurcation; however, this deserves complication: Figure 5.11, for instance, shows variation within the ‘small’ category, with a majority group with incomes under £1 million, and a smaller group with incomes between £1 million and £10 million. Interestingly, however, staff from this latter group of ‘middle-income’ organisations often defined their IDNGO as ‘small’, particularly in relation to big players like ActionAid, Plan, World Vision and Compassion. Thus, distinguishable here are both absolute sector bifurcation and a sensed bifurcation based on relative size comparisons, both of which exert important influences on IDNGOs.

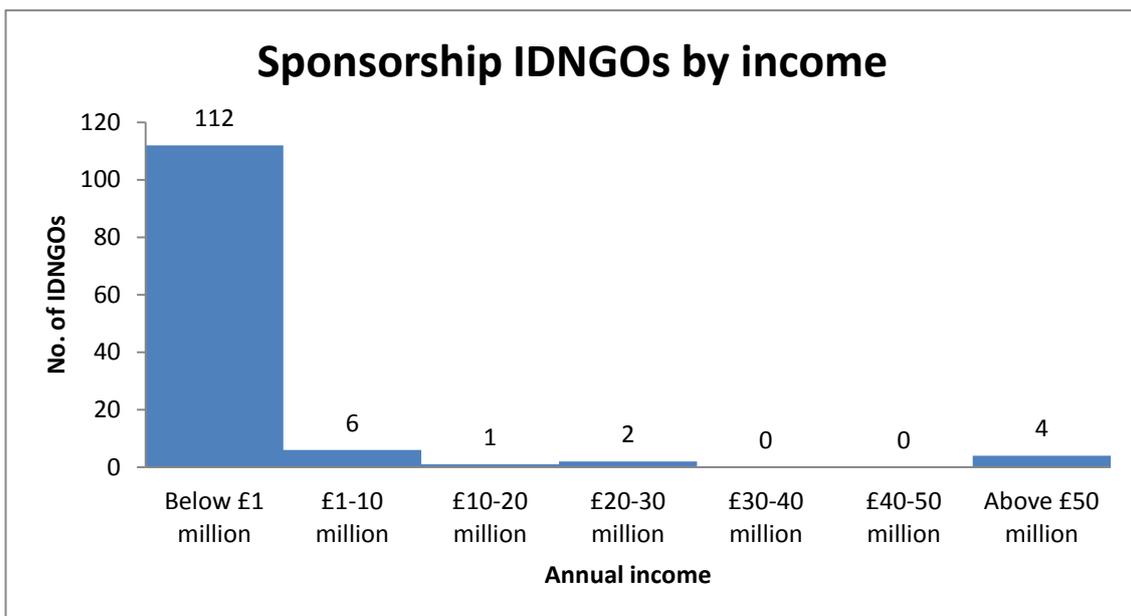


Figure 5.11: Polarisation of IDNGOs by income, using data from IDNGO reports and the Charities Commission database. This is only a crude scalar indicator since income is only one scalar factor; however data regarding other factors (e.g. number of sponsors) is less widely available.

5.5.1 Scale and fundraising practice

Firstly, scale configures the practical politics of IDNGO fundraising. Many small IDNGOs, lacking the budget for mass campaigns, are limited to cheaper recruitment methods: usually word-of-mouth or community events. For instance, the 2012 fundraising activities of Cornwall-based ACE, the smallest IDNGO in this study, ranged from dog shows and cream teas to garden parties and quiz

nights. Such IDNGOs often *purposefully* seek out these low-cost opportunities⁵⁷ as an alternative to competing directly with large IDNGOs:

“Take Compassion...it’s really difficult to compete at that level! And their financial basis is far greater than ours...increasingly we will spend a lot more time trying to engage people maybe through the internet more, maybe through direct contact activities, make more of word of mouth...” (Head of Communications, Global Care)

Small IDNGOs thus become both inevitably and purposefully positioned within low-cost marketing networks, insulating them from large-scale competition and affirming their grassroots association. Some complication is needed here, however. For instance, two small IDNGOs⁵⁸ attributed their recent growth largely to website traffic from medium-sized IDNGO SOS, whose website includes a comparison page listing 31 other sponsorship IDNGOs. Small-scale activity is therefore not always exclusively ‘local’ (though it remains low-cost), but spills beyond this, involving internet flows and even other IDNGO networks.

Not all IDNGOs in this position embrace it comfortably, however. Some staff aspire to having the resources of large IDNGOs for monitoring database rhythms and accurately assessing trends:

“We kind of go on hearsay and a bit of empirical evidence, but actually if we really properly researched [giving trends], it would be fantastic...We’re not in a position at the moment where for example we could slice and dice the database...it comes back to this thing, if we could analyse and assess our own experience in a more systematic way.” (Head of Communications, Global Care)

Small IDNGOs do not, therefore, always resign themselves to grassroots spaces, but often aspire beyond them, though this does not necessarily translate into a simple quest for growth. Indeed, several staff expressed that the slow growth rate impressed upon them by their low-cost marketing spaces suits their structures and strategies, allowing projects to be developed organically and responsively⁵⁹. Rejecting a purposeful growth strategy affords some protection regarding pressures to professionalise, whilst cultivating public trust and ticking other neoliberal boxes by emphasising quality service output, efficiency and flexibility. Thus, whilst the scalar polarisation of IDNGOs might imply a consolidation of the sponsorship market in favour of a few multinational,

⁵⁷ Global Care, SOS.

⁵⁸ ACE, Kindu Trust.

⁵⁹ ACE, Project Mala, Kindu Trust.

neoliberalised IDNGOs; a more nuanced picture highlights the advantageous positioning of smaller IDNGOs regarding neoliberal environments.

Conversely, the larger IDNGOs grow, the more important explicit growth strategies become, impacting the nature of organisational management. At Plan and ActionAid, talk of targets, stock and projections were prevalent. At ActionAid, estimates are made of how many 'child profiles' (that is, details about individual children for sponsors) to order in annually using recruitment targets, estimated success rates of different marketing methods and the number of profiles currently "*on the shelf in stock*", whilst accounting statistically for several other parameters⁶⁰. The corporatised emphasis on return here was apparent, re-reading sponsorship much more mechanistically. This would appear inevitable for such large schemes, annually handling tens of thousands of donors and millions of pounds; as well as schemes with a community development focus (like ActionAid's), where sponsorship is primarily about enticing committed giving. Associations are therefore affirmed between large organisational scale, professionalised procedures and the deployment of sponsorship predominantly for its money-making capacity, re-affirming associations of large IDNGOs with neoliberal co-option. In all, scalar variations strongly shape how IDNGOs experience pressures for fundraising, growth and 'good governance'. Smaller IDNGOs are not necessarily 'less' neoliberal, it would seem, but *differently* so, and in ways which afford them different strengths and weaknesses (though in general seem to circumscribe their activities much less strongly than larger IDNGOs).

5.5.2 Scale as PR tool: cultivating organisational competitiveness

In addition to framing the practical parameters of sponsor recruitment, variations in organisational size also enjoy influential discursive associations (the more so because of the felt bifurcation mentioned previously). This positions IDNGOs differently in terms of promotional rhetoric, affording different strengths and weaknesses in the context of broader competition for funds. Across the smaller IDNGOs in this study, staff overwhelmingly drew a connection between small organisational size and good quality work, whether in

⁶⁰ Head of Supporter Care.

terms of efficiency, expertise and responsiveness to development projects, or personable accessibility to the public:

“The small size of The Kindu Trust is a big advantage as it ensures that the team in Gondar is intimately acquainted with all of our beneficiaries...The Kindu Trust keeps its operating costs low while refusing to compromise on the quality of care that we offer to our sponsored families and our supporters. To keep our UK costs to a minimum...we draw on the skills and expertise of our enthusiastic group of volunteers...with only one part-time paid staff member.” (Kindu Trust website⁶¹)

Beyond promotional rhetoric, through which scalar associations are clearly mobilised as a way to establish organisational legitimacy, staff often expressed genuine belief that these characteristics enhance the quality of their work:

“If you're a sponsor, and you ring up here, you're going to get me! You know, in what other charity can you ring up and speak to the chairman? And the chairman knows! He's not a titular chairman that just...'oh of course, that's dealt with down in that department'...I do most things! [Laugh] I mean that's our biggest strength right now, is short lines of communication.” (Chairman, Project Mala)

Staff from smaller IDNGOs also drew relative associations between larger organisations and the reverse characteristics: bureaucracy, corporatism, inefficiency, inflexibility and inaccessibility; as well as suspicion regarding the honest/efficient management of funds⁶². Much of this suspicion is wedded to a sense of distance and disconnection from the circles in which larger IDNGOs move, spatialising, moralising and reinforcing their scalar distinction. Smaller IDNGOs are therefore able to capitalise publicly on many advantageous associations surrounding their size, bolstering this with insinuations that large IDNGOs do not offer the same calibre of service (note that this reification of service quality affirms the importance of neoliberal discourses). It therefore benefits them to reproduce a sense of sector bifurcation by strategically attaching meaning to a small/large dichotomy.

Large IDNGOs are not at a complete disadvantage, however, since this politics of association is mixed because of simultaneous associations of large-scale activity with particular advantages, from access to influential media and political outlets to economies of scale, to the legitimacy of being an established name. These advantages can be mobilised to frame allegations about small-

⁶¹ <http://kindustrust.org/about-us/>, accessed 31/07/13.

⁶² ChildAid, Project Mala, Grassroots, Kindu Trust, ACE.

scale activity as unprofessional, inefficient and unstable work, as this quote from Compassion advocate and Christian writer Jeff Lucas shows:

“Get involved with a bigger organisation... Often local churches, without the real knowledge or expertise to ensure proper monitoring, spend large sums of money setting up schemes to help others. Frequently there are other organisations who are experts in the same field. Compassion is one such organisation.” (Compassion booklet, 2012)

Nonetheless, also visible in the policies and processes of larger IDNGOs are recognitions that negative allegations still surround large-scale activity and may well shape public imaginations. For instance, at ActionAid, the child profiles sent to new sponsors are deliberately produced to look ‘homely’ (from the choice of font to the quality of the paper and printing), promoting an accessible face of the organisation *“because people just see it as being authentic”*⁶³. The politics which become attached to organisational scale thus become vital to the competitive establishment (or disruption) of organisational legitimacy, leading to a variety of different tactics being employed to (a) capitalise on advantageous associations, and (b) cover over, dispel or displace negative ones.

5.5.3 Section conclusions

IDNGO scale appears to have ramifications for organisational identity, strategy, public image and networked position. Scalar differences diversify how the pressures of neoliberal environments and the concerns of internal organisational imperatives are both experienced and negotiated. Since the majority of existing literature focuses on large-scale, national and international IDNGOs, it tends to miss the importance of this point.

This discussion shows that associations made between small-scale activity, grassroots spaces and neoliberal alternatives, and between large-scale IDNGOs, corporatised spaces and neoliberal restructuring, deserve some complication. Whilst these associations have considerable merit and are often purposefully embedded by IDNGO marketing discourses, there is evidence of more complex experiences of and responses to neoliberal pressures than simply subjection on the one hand and independence on the other. Furthermore, this discussion also suggests the importance of exploring the different spaces and networks occupied by IDNGOs, and how being positioned

⁶³ Head of Supporter Care.

differently in this regard (whether because of scale or some other factor) changes the way that sponsorship is done. I now turn to this theme.

5.6 Organisational positioning

This section attends to how the organisational spaces of charity are shaped by IDNGO positioning within particular spaces and networks: I approach this by considering variously how organisational positioning is shaped by scale, ethos, strategy and organisational specificity. Throughout, I seek to further muddy assumptions that IDNGOs are evenly, equally vulnerable to the same internal tensions and external pressures for neoliberal good governance, thus disturbing simplistic, one-size-fits-all arguments regarding their strengths, weaknesses, dynamics and potentials.

5.6.1 Scalar positionings

In general, large IDNGOs seem more vulnerable to neoliberal 'good governance' pressures. Their size demands increased professionalisation, and their eligibility for grants from institutions like DfID demands demonstrable evidence of service delivery and neoliberal governance objectives. They also tend to occupy more central positions in debates about Third Sector governance, which in recent years have become increasingly neoliberalised (see 2.3.3; 2.3.4). The Child Sponsorship Charter (see 5.4.1; Appendix D) provides a key example of how such debates become integrated into shared codes of conduct, languages and organisational cultures. As suggested previously, small IDNGOs often develop in less professionalised ways, thus enjoying some insulation from major competitors (and, by extension, the cultures of governance in which they move). This is especially so if their work is deeply intertwined with local community fabrics, as this website extract from ACE shows:

“Sunday 17th June was the appointed day for the eighth Newmill Open Gardens. After all the rain we have had, we were relieved to get a dry day with a little sunshine from time to time. We had a good attendance and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. At The Old Post Office there was an art exhibition and a bookstall. At Trelynden there were plants for sale and a tombola...Stars of the show this year were Pensans Morris [dancers]...The traffic was marshalled as usual by Newmill's own policeman. He also found time to give helpful

*directions to attractive lady visitors! The raffle...was drawn at the end of the day by the Vicar of Madron and Gulval...The event raised £3,060 for ACE funds...Thank you to everyone who helped or came along.*⁶⁴

This extract shows that IDNGO fundraising does not take place within a backdrop of 'the local', but intertwines co-productively with senses of local community. This insulates against competition by establishing a loyal support base, where donors are often also personal friends. Such approaches are aided by the charisma of staff, where accessible to supporters, which functions to inspire support and legitimacy, particularly if staff are seen getting their hands dirty leading 'real' development work, rather than shrouded in layers of inaccessible bureaucracy (see also 6.2.1). It is therefore clear that organisational scale plays a key role in positioning IDNGOs with regards to contemporary pressures and competitive environments, affording them different strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and constraints.

5.6.2 Strategic positionings

The networks and spaces occupied by IDNGOs are also shaped strategically. For instance, despite association with small-scale IDNGO activity, the community spaces discussed above are often targeted from a more top-down position by large IDNGOs, mobilising the inspiration of charismatic individuals in other ways. ActionAid, for instance, encourages existing sponsors to voluntarily cultivate support within their own social networks:

"Please can you ask someone you know to sponsor a child?...it doesn't have to be difficult, just think about the people you talk to all the time...we have lots of ways of helping you spread the word" (ActionAid's 'Action' magazine, 2011)

To whatever extent these efforts are officially encouraged by the IDNGO, these enthusiastic, evangelistic supporters become 'intermediary reinforcements' of organisational discourses and ethical repertoires (Barnett et al, 2005: 36). This bottom-up volunteer charisma often conjoins with the top-down charisma of celebrities, who lend the organisation senses of spectacle and credibility (Yrjölä, 2011; Kapoor, 2013). Furthermore, lacking living founders who can personalise their work; large, longer-standing IDNGOs refer instead to their own 'founding father' stories in promotions, even if these diverge substantially from the organisation's contemporary form and focus (e.g. Figure 5.12).

⁶⁴ <http://www.ace-charity.org.uk/fundraising2012.html>, accessed 31/07/13.



Figure 5.12: Plan promotion (2012) involving the daughter of Plan's 'founding father', John Langdon-Davies.

Thus, whilst smaller IDNGOs might 'naturally' benefit from senses of grassroots authenticity and accessibility, larger IDNGOs seek to tap into similar mechanisms of face-to-face rapport and charisma in other ways,

using local volunteers, celebrities and references to their own founders. These strategies purposefully counter associations, discussed previously, between large organisational size and impersonal bureaucracy. In sum, IDNGOs seek *strategically* to establish themselves within certain networks and spaces, though in ways which depend on their starting position- large IDNGOs approach and occupy 'local' community networks *differently* than small IDNGOs, negotiating different tensions as they proceed (e.g. a corporatist veneer).

5.6.3 Ethos-inspired positionings

The networks and spaces which IDNGOs occupy also depend on organisational ethos. A key example involves Christian IDNGOs, many of which restrict their marketing activity to faith-based networks (though these are of course fluid and porous, and therefore difficult to pin down). This often stems from fear that extending beyond such territory will force a morally untenable dilution of their faith⁶⁵. Faith-based support is also often validated as more holistic (e.g. prayerful as well as financial). A staff member at SOS (not religiously affiliated) expressed enviously that Christian spaces form ready-made support bases for faith-based IDNGOs, providing an automatic advantage⁶⁶. However, a different story was forwarded by interviewees from faith-based IDNGOs, re-reading these networks as increasingly over-competitive, with Compassion and World Vision dominating the market⁶⁷:

⁶⁵ These commitments are undoubtedly also strategic, given the potential rapport offered by communities with similar belief systems, evidencing the interrelation of ethos with strategy.

⁶⁶ Marketing Director.

⁶⁷ Global Care, Toybox, ChildAid, Grassroots.

“...people like Compassion and people like World Vision in particular are so dominant, with such a high profile, and they have managed to get their way into our core audience, which is basically the church or Christian audience...It’s really difficult to compete at that level!...It’s not for me to criticise, it’s for me to gnash my teeth and think- well, how on earth can we respond to that?!” (Head of Communications, Global Care)

This quote barely does justice to the intense pressure being experienced within this IDNGO and others in the face of this competition. One CEO described it as the ‘Tesco-isation’ of the Christian child sponsorship market⁶⁸, indicating the sense of defeat and hopelessness being felt by these organisations. Even more extremely, Food for the Hungry UK, a branch of US Christian IDNGO by the same name, has been trying unsuccessfully to establish UK support for over a decade (recruiting a total of 100 sponsors, compared to 25,000-30,000 in the US). The UK Officer attributed this to intense competition, responding despondently: *“If it were just about child sponsorship, we’d give up.”* For some staff, this affirms already-existing suspicions about large IDNGOs wielding too much corporate power:

“It has been difficult. I mean, four walls conversation, some of the things that have happened we would find difficult...So if we for instance want a presence at a particular event, another agency might say that because they are sponsoring that event, they wouldn’t want somebody like [us] there...we’re excluded because of their power over the finances, and that’s happened this year.” (CEO, anonymity requested)

These ethical concerns commonly intersect with theo-ethical concerns about what constitutes ‘appropriate’ behaviour for Christian charities, framed by concerns about the amplification of ‘worldly’ (in this case neoliberal) patterns within Christian communities, which should seek different structures and values (e.g. Jethani, 2009; Ekklesia, 2010). At Grassroots, staff bemoaned the aggressive marketisation of Christian charity as raising big ethical questions about how Christians should behave. Conversely, at Compassion, staff showed little awareness of such allegations; or of the broader impacts of their marketing presences, positioning their occupation of Christian networks as simply about getting more children sponsored.

Ethos-inspired networking decisions, and their confluence with flows of strategy, can therefore run counter to other (e.g. financial) logics, producing some interesting negotiations and shaping organisational exposure to

⁶⁸ The interviewee requested anonymity regarding this comment.

competitive pressures. Such developments are parameterised strongly by organisational size; whilst Compassion's dominance subjects it to corporatist allegations, for instance, smaller Christian IDNGOs face uncertainties surrounding their very survival. In sum, the ways in which trends towards increased competition and sector professionalisation are being felt and negotiated by sponsorship IDNGOs cannot be read off broader trends without adequate consideration of the specific contextual dynamics and vulnerabilities each organisation faces, stemming not least from ethos-based decisions.

5.6.4 Particularities of IDNGO development

Finally, variations in organisational positioning exist because IDNGOs emerge and develop in situated ways that afford particular advantages and disadvantages. I briefly revisit two examples to illustrate this: the Kindu Trust⁶⁹, and Compassion. The Kindu Trust emerged in Ethiopia in 1998, a small, informal effort aimed at street children; and has subsequently become established through the Ethiopian tourist trade, its projects included in tours and guides. Kindu's low-cost, 'local' recruitment forms therefore involve networks which far exceed the areas in which it formally works. These networks are far removed from those commonly used by other IDNGOs marketing sponsorship, lessening competitive pressures. Furthermore, recruiting from tourists who visit the projects lessens fundraising pressures and cultivates highly loyal support.

By contrast, large, professionalised, evangelical Christian IDNGO Compassion, also active in the UK since the late 1990s, forms a national branch of US-based Compassion International. Importantly, Compassion's UK presence actually began in 1975, under the umbrella of established Christian IDNGO Tearfund. Upon independence in 1999, therefore, Compassion was already known in many Christian communities. The Tearfund partnership protected its initial establishment, affording it high-profile marketing opportunities and automatic legitimacy, giving Compassion a competitive head-start most other IDNGOs never enjoy. Whilst IDNGOs may seemingly fit certain categories regarding their scale, epistemological approach and ethos, therefore; fully understanding their contemporary positioning requires appraisal of their particular emergence and development. This, as these two cases show, upturns

⁶⁹ Details from interview with Director of Operations.

strengths and weaknesses regarding broader trends and competitive pressures which would otherwise go unnoticed.

5.6.5 Section conclusions

The diversity and complexity characterising the contemporary UK sponsorship landscape owes to variations not only in epistemology and organisational scale, but also in organisational positioning. Whether configured by scale, ethos or strategy, or the particularities of IDNGO emergence and development, this shapes IDNGO vulnerability to broader tensions and pressures (for 'good governance', for marketised, competitive fundraising, etc), underscoring the argument that IDNGOs experience such pressures unevenly. Deserving of more attention within the above is organisational ethos, which represents a final factor governing IDNGO spaces, to which I now turn.

5.7 Ethos

Whilst the three factors identified so far highlight some stark divergences between child sponsorship IDNGOs, my final axis, ethos, involves finer complexities. These are nonetheless vital to understand, however, since ethos pushes organisations into being and frames their day-to-day activities. In referring to ethos, I refer to the ethical dynamics which co-constitute organisational space, here divided into two parts. Firstly, I discuss ethics which suffuse everyday organisational activities, governing staff practices, arguing that they exceed neoliberal value sets (e.g. efficiency, transparency, professionalism). Secondly, I discuss the *motivational* ethics undergirding this activity, arguing that these exceed cynical accounts of do-gooderism and uncritical organisational self-reproduction. The excesses of each, I argue, help explain the contemporary diversity and complexity of the child sponsorship landscape, and offer potential platforms for the development of more radical ethical and political projects through the medium of charity.

5.7.1 Ethics of organisational governance

Existing literature on Third Sector organisations suggests the increasing prevalence of neoliberal values within organisational governance (see 2.3),

visible in concerns for efficiency, transparency and accountability, professionalisation and the marketisation of charity 'products' like sponsorship. Pressure to adopt such parameters issues from regulatory bodies like the Charities Commission, grant stipulations, and broader professional discourses. Here, I discuss the extent to which the empirical landscape of sponsorship supports these arguments of neoliberalisation.

The nature of IDNGO staffing, firstly, seems increasingly neoliberalised. In particular, senior staff are being sourced largely from business, economics and management sectors, to streamline IDNGOs and ensure their competitive standing, meaning that they appear increasingly business-like (see 2.3.3). Over half the senior staff members I interviewed have just such a professional background. Furthermore, large IDNGOs are increasingly associated with competitive staff recruitment procedures:

"We lose people- we've lost four people to World Vision in the last year. Because they pay more money. They pay, you know, 30, 40, 50% more than we pay. So we can train people up, and then they just [transfer]!! Well, that's life! I'm not saying that's wrong, I'm saying that's the commerciality of life."
(CEO, Toybox)

These trends, and the angst they clearly cause, are not evenly spread, however. In many smaller IDNGOs, budget constraints often preclude paid staff positions, necessitating a reliance on volunteers with significant time to give, who are thus often (though not always) retirees. This then influences the networks within which IDNGOs work and the kinds of appeal they have.

In addition to staffing, IDNGOs seek discursive associations with 'good governance' parameters. However these claims work out practically, they represent discursive hoops through which IDNGOs increasingly feel the need to jump in order to be deemed credible. For instance, organisational efficiency is often promoted through tactical references to the 'Golden Ratio', the percentage of donations spent on development projects, rather than administration (e.g. Figure 5.13). This is unsurprising, since child sponsorship has long been singled out as epitomising wasteful charity (e.g. Stalker, 1982; 1989). Sponsorship also, however, presents 'natural' opportunities to capitalise on senses of transparency and accountability because of its feel of connection and insight. Thus, its extra overheads are, in the face of inefficiency allegations, legitimised as making IDNGOs more accountable.

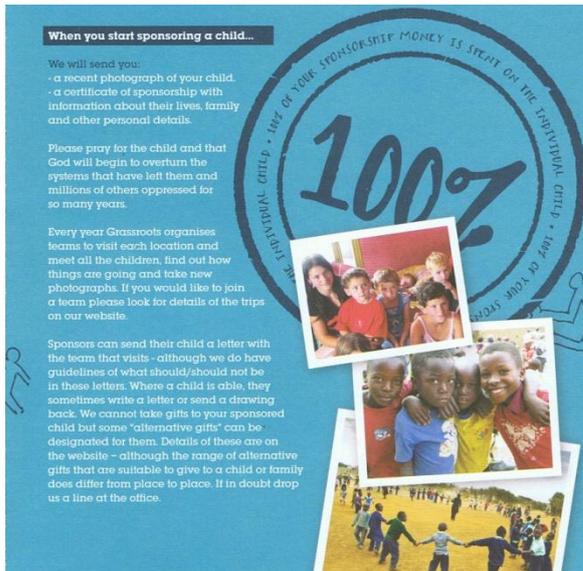


Figure 5.13: Grassroots sponsorship promotion (2012), displaying a large 'hallmark' (connoting legitimacy, authenticity) guaranteeing that all donations go straight to the projects.

Further claims of accountability and service delivery are staked through references to indisputable 'hard facts', whether regular updates, detailed financial statements or photographic 'evidence': ACT, for instance, ensures that children are photographed when opening gifts from sponsors, as proof of receipt.

This emphasis on the legitimacy of eyewitness and service delivery achievements, with its clear reliance on problematic performances of

gratitude, is also visible in the promotional use of 'success stories', where

former sponsored children narrate (usually in their own words) how sponsorship has positively impacted their lives (e.g. Figure 5.14). Also prevalent are sponsor testimonials, in 'review' form (where sponsors testify to positive experiences of sponsorship or the IDNGO) or as eyewitness report, where sponsors visit sponsored children and write 'firsthand' accounts (see



Figure 5.14: A formerly Compassion-sponsored 'success story', accompanied by narrative in her own words (published in a 2012 fundraising pamphlet).

Figure 5.15). Interestingly, these testimonial forms are frequently used by IDNGOs with community development-based schemes (e.g. Plan, ActionAid),

representing a clear traditional emphasis on personal relationship and transformation that starkly contrasts their projects. As argued in section 5.2, 'indirect' sponsorship schemes do not necessarily shy away from traditional forms of ethical appeal.



An enlightening visit to Nicaragua

Alexandra Knight recently set off from her home in East Sussex for a first face-to-face get together with Francis after staying in touch by

An enlightening visit to Nicaragua



Family bowled over by warm welcome in India

Teacher Richard Hudson and his family travelled to a remote village in the Himalayas to visit Sanjay, the boy they sponsor. The cricket set they took proved a big hit.



Seeing the difference in Sri Lanka

The Presmans visited five year old Navodya, the girl they sponsor in Sri Lanka and were pleased to see the valuable difference Plan is making in her community - a community the family now feels a part of.

Figure 5.15: Testimonial reports from Plan sponsors who have visited their sponsored children, available in plentiful supply on the Plan website (Plan, 2013b).

Finally, in addition to claims about efficiency, transparency and accountability, it seems that the marketised appeal of child sponsorship is being embraced by IDNGOs, with sponsorship being narrated unashamedly as a consumer product:

“...if people want to stop their sponsorship, it's for us to be a little bit flexible, so maybe offering them payment holidays, or downgrading their payment or putting them onto another product because some sponsors are very attached to the product, to sponsorship...” (Supporter Relations Manager, Plan)

This quote clearly shows the extent to which business terminologies and epistemological infrastructures pervade contemporary IDNGOs, seemingly stripping sponsorship of meaning beyond a contractual financial agreement. There is much evidence, then, to suggest that IDNGOs are increasingly becoming more professionalised and business-like.

There are, however, important nuances in this trend. Firstly, IDNGOs *perceive* neoliberal governance ethics diversely. At Grassroots, transparency and accountability were re-narrated as faith-inspired honesty, cf. ‘dishonest’ marketing tactics which depart too much from reality. Thus, instead of simply seeking to tick neoliberal boxes, organisational discourse is suffused with scrupulous straight-talking, whatever the PR consequences, for the sake of honesty itself. This difference in perception and motivational prompt therefore leads to significant variations in response. Secondly, IDNGOs are *equipped* differently to negotiate neoliberal governance ethics. For instance, large

IDNGOs are publicly more vulnerable to allegations of bureaucracy and corporatism than small IDNGOs (see 5.3). IDNGOs with more 'direct' schemes are better positioned to utilise 'success stories' of individual children as proof of service delivery (though this doesn't prevent IDNGOs with less direct schemes using this tactic). IDNGOs which emerge and develop in conjunction with particular social networks (e.g. the Kindu Trust and Ethiopian tourism) might be less vulnerable to competitive pressures, enjoying automatic legitimacy in certain communities. Thus, depending on axes such as scale, epistemology and positioning, IDNGOs become differentially vulnerable to neoliberal governance pressures.

Finally, the *ethics* which suffuse organisational activity cannot be fully encapsulated by narratives of neoliberalisation; there is more going on, and this ethical excess can often counter neoliberal imperatives. For instance, at Compassion head offices, a faith-driven valorisation of personal relationship prompts staff to put tremendous effort into caring *for* donors, often in glaringly 'inefficient' ways. Every query and concern is thoroughly chased up; cold calling and leaflet drops are minimised in favour of face-to-face engagements, and staff who deal with sponsors over the telephone are trained extensively in both diplomacy and counselling, offering advice and prayer. I was surprised by the extent to which these performances conjoined pro-Compassion strategy with deep care and concern for sponsors ("*They are NOT 'customers'!*"⁷⁰), belying a genuine belief in the substantive, as well as the tactical, benefits of a relational care ethic. Whilst in many ways this approach seems highly consumerist, staff efforts to go-beyond (Cloke, 2002) nevertheless involve 'inefficient', voluntary generosity. There is ethical life in these high levels of concern for donors, with explicit rejections of neoliberal labels such as 'customer' and narratives of care for care's sake, rather than out of financial necessity.

It is therefore impossible to fully grasp the ethics which frame organisational activities purely with narratives of neoliberal co-option. The other ethical dynamics present must also be acknowledged. These inflect neoliberal pressures differently within organisational space, unsettling simplistic narratives of neoliberalisation and drawing in diversifying factors such as scale, epistemology and positioning. Also important, as the above example shows, are

⁷⁰ Supporter Engagement Officer.

the ethical flows which motivate both staff behaviours and broader organisational existences, discussed subsequently.

5.7.2 Motivational ethics

Little is known about the motivations which undergird IDNGOs. Common narratives either cite Victorian do-gooderism and the 'white man's burden' (see 2.2.1; 2.5.1), or the notion that IDNGOs are predominantly driven by a concern to reproduce themselves (Edwards, 1999; Tonkiss and Passey, 1999). These, I argue here, are cynical accounts with limited merit. I refer particularly to individual staff motivations, rather than official ethos statements, since the former translate the latter into practical reality, citing and reworking them.

Allegations of 'do-gooderism' do contain a grain of truth: staff sometimes employed generic, uncritical claims of 'making a difference' and 'doing my bit'⁷¹. However, more complex ethical influences are also present. Many staff members derive personal inspiration from the character or deeds of another individual (whether the organisation's founder, a family member, friend or religious figure), or from personal experiences (e.g. of development projects) that provide motivational memories for their present work. Their activities therefore become framed with responsiveness to these particularities. Furthermore, staff performances always draw in other parts of their identities. At ACE, for instance, staff members are all retirees; their development work in Uganda and their fundraising work in Cornwall have therefore become important ways of performing retirement.

This idea of staff ethics involving the performance of complex social and ethical formulations is also exemplified by many Christian staff, who often narrated their involvement in terms of spiritual 'calling'⁷² or, as below, 'pushing':

"I'm being pushed. It's the only way I can describe it...I don't know what made me apply for the job, I don't know what made the job advert jump out at me, I don't know what made me grab the postman every time he walked past me to see if I'd got an interview! I was just pushed..." (Head of Donor Relations, Global Care)

The ethical flows here expand beyond the empathetic pull of suffering, and notions of 'making a difference', to include relational engagements with God

⁷¹ Kingscare, ACE.

⁷² ACT, Compassion, Food for the Hungry, Global Care, Grassroots.

and felt senses of God's agency. Instead of the ethically dull notions of duty popularly associated with Christian living, these senses of calling and pushing suggest the possibility of a more dynamic reading emphasising relational interaction with God, and personal joy and satisfaction derived from living responsively to this. This re-reads the development landscape with an added spiritual dimension, transcending socio-cultural analyses of development discourses and sector trends. Similarly, sometimes project success and organisational growth were taken as evidence of God's favour and guidance⁷³; other staff narrated particular experiences of opposition and difficulty as underpinned by spiritually negative (i.e. demonic) forces⁷⁴. It is important to understand that these perspectives are not some kind of medieval hangover, but represent very real ways in which the world and our being-in it is understood and made meaningful (see Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009).

Similarly, often centralised are faith-inspired concerns to witness publicly to the importance of Christianity, whether to colleagues, the public or aid recipients. An important discourse in this respect regards the notion of a faith distinctive; that is, where faith is expected to work out in ways which distinguish staff from others with different beliefs doing similar work. If it doesn't, it is not being practised radically, or authentically, enough⁷⁵. Much confusion exists about whether such 'distinctive' praxis is being achieved. One CEO remarked:

*"I've thought quite long and hard about...what is our Christian distinctive? What makes us different? ...there's a belief that God answers prayer, there's an importance that we see ourselves as God's people, and that we in doing our work are doing what God calls us to, but...Do [we] have time out where [we] simply wait on God and listen to His voice?...The actual modus operandi tends to be 'because we are Christian this is what we do', rather than 'our understanding of what God is calling us to is fundamentally shaping the decisions we make'."*⁷⁶

Whilst 'Christian' responses cannot be condensed into one set of narratives (e.g. not all are evangelical; not all express concern for spiritual landscapes; not all read faith in terms of distinctiveness from others), this response usefully shows how faith-inspired prompts and motivations are not immune from difficulty or instability. Rather, they involve fluid negotiations, in this case

⁷³ Child-Link, Fields of Life.

⁷⁴ Grassroots.

⁷⁵ N.B. This idea of distinctiveness is different to capitalist notions of a competitive advantage, since the underlying goal is not profit, but ideological statement.

⁷⁶ Toybox.

regarding the ways in which belief, faith and spirituality are integrated into organisational existence.

The examples given here demonstrate that the ethical flows coursing through staff performances involve expansive webs of motivation and commitment, ethically more complex than empathetic 'do-gooderism' and relationally irreducible to responses to the other. These complexities, vitally, underpin how sponsorship is rolled out, how sponsors are involved and how IDNGOs understand their own existences. I now examine how this shapes the democratic potential of IDNGOs and their Northern constituency work.

5.7.3 Section conclusions: democratic potential?

The ethical dynamics imbuing IDNGOs involve ethics of practice, motivation and complex intersections between these. This discussion shows that they clearly exceed both neoliberal orthodoxies and 'official' organisational ethos statements, and therefore deserve a richer reading than narratives of neoliberal and colonial co-option. If these ethical excesses do not conform to one easy narrative, however, how might they frame useful discussions regarding the broader ethical potentials of charity? To grapple with this, it is useful to distinguish between ethics which draw and defend boundaries, refusing to engage with otherness on its own terms; and ethics which blur taken-for-granted relationships, humbling the self to listen and become vulnerable to change.

This distinction is most recently visible within work on the postsecular (e.g. Cloke et al, 2005; Cloke and Beaumont, 2012) regarding faith prompts and motivations. In terms of boundary-drawing and defence, faith inspirations often prompt strong lines of ethical commitment and direction, compounding the 'moral freight' (Cloke et al, 2007) of action with ethical meaning. Like any ideology, this becomes problematic when it frames attitudes to otherness which demand conversion (see Cloke et al, 2005), and distances the self from critique or questioning. Compassion would appear archetypal: as an explicitly evangelical Christian IDNGO, Compassion promotes its sponsorship scheme on the grounds that sponsored children get to hear the Gospel, and conversion is deemed a key marker of project success. Compassion refuses to market beyond evangelical Christian networks and spaces, and defends its faith basis

strongly against ‘compromise’ (e.g. refusal to remove the last three words from its strap-line- ‘Releasing children from poverty in Jesus’ name’ -despite external pressure to do so⁷⁷).

In contrast, other faith-inspired IDNGOs conform more to narratives of boundary-blurring, positioning their faith as a motivation and value set rather than a label delineating project agendas, epistemological approaches, recruitment procedures or staffing policies in a more exclusive sense⁷⁸. Designations of boundary-drawing and boundary-blurring behaviour therefore suggest that the ethical dynamics of faith-based charity are neither singular nor uniform. Both types of behaviour can, of course, be exhibited within one IDNGO, as Compassion’s open-ended ethos of relational care and welcome shows (5.6.1), countering arguments that single IDNGOs can easily be apprehended as either ‘ethical’ or ‘unethical’.

This framework need not be confined to discussions of faith motivations, however, since the same designations also apply to religiously unaffiliated IDNGOs and staff. For example, both Plan and ActionAid draw explicitly secular lines around themselves: “*Plan is independent, with no religious or political affiliation*”⁷⁹; “*Our values...[include] independence from any religious or party-political affiliation*”⁸⁰. Though muddled empirically (for instance, c.30% of ActionAid supporters are faith-inspired⁸¹), these denials are about cultivating public trust by constructing an organisational identity of objectivity through references to secularity. These, as the above quotes show, are often conjoined with denials of *political* connection (again, despite contrary empirical evidence), drawing on cultural significations coursing through ‘religion’ and ‘politics’- especially when used together -connoting negative ideas of bias, indoctrination and underhand agendas. Similarly, religiously unaffiliated IDNGOs need not demarcate themselves as explicitly ‘secular’, and often willingly partner with organisations and individuals regardless of belief. At the Kindu Trust, for instance, founder Kate Eshete has spent years cultivating support through social networks, community groups and churches. Some of her supporters self-

⁷⁷ Marketing Director.

⁷⁸ Global Care, ChildAid, ACT.

⁷⁹ <http://www.plan-uk.org/about-us/our-history/>, accessed 02/08/13.

⁸⁰ <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/our-vision-and-values>, accessed 02/08/13.

⁸¹ Head of Supporter Marketing.

identify as Christian, some do not, but their common stance is support for Kate and the Trust's work helping Ethiopian families. Whatever ethical resources are mobilised to frame charitable work, then, its ethical potential depends significantly on whether they are configured around rigid boundary-drawing practices, or around blurrier 'crossover' partnerships and encounters, based on 'mutually translating' ethical narratives accessible to both parties (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012; Cloke, 2013). This, then, provides one way for the ethical potentials of contemporary charity to be subject to critical appraisal.

This project might be augmented by being mapped onto postcolonial perspectives. Charity (particularly development charity) has long been critiqued for embedding unequal power relationships based on pity, patronage and the superiority of the giver. This intersects with the above discussion of faith, not least due to the long-standing associations between faith and colonialism (see 2.5.1). Yet, the above examples of 'blurrier' behaviour also seemingly cite more postcolonial ethics, challenging stereotypical relations and championing ethical qualities such as humility and listening. As such, the boundary-defending and boundary-blurring ethics discussed here map not only onto narratives of the postsecular, but also the colonial and postcolonial. This highlights similar ethical tethers and values which underpin these diverse literary arenas, suggesting possible points of confluence that are only just beginning to be opened up and explored (e.g. SURD conference, forthcoming 2013).

In sum, one way in which the ethical dynamics of charity might be critically discussed is through a distinction between boundary-drawing and boundary-blurring activity. Rather than dismissing IDNGOs out-of-hand by attaching ethical assumptions to labels such as 'large-scale', or 'Christian', this is about appraising the kinds of relationships being encouraged and affirmed by each organisation, through their structures and policies, and also through the everyday practices of staff. In turn, this involves excavating the nexus between the professional pressures and imperatives they juggle daily, and the complex motivations and value systems which undergird their activity.

5.8 Chapter conclusions

Existing literatures on the Northern constituency activities of IDNGOs, and on Third Sector and international development trends, predominantly condemn IDNGOs (firstly) as reproducing colonial tropes and power relations, (secondly) as increasingly neoliberalised, and (thirdly) as beholden to a particular cocktail of tasks issuing from the parameters of contemporary IDNGO existence. Concerns to deepen and politicise the Northern constituency work being done by IDNGOs would seem to be considerably circumscribed in this context. The research presented here on child sponsorship IDNGOs clearly demonstrates the continued salience of these narratives. Sponsorship schemes appear to be configured more so than ever around competition, service delivery and neoliberal ethics of good governance; they continually deploy long-standing, problematic imaginaries and vocabularies to apprehend the world charitably, and rely on increasingly consumerised giving encounters. This research has particularly emphasised the influence of drives to achieve simplicity, personability and singularity through sponsorship schemes, each rendering the schemes emotively powerful but underscoring romanticised tropes of apolitical charity and personal responsibility, rather than disrupting long-standing colonial inequities. I have also highlighted the prevalence of neoliberal values and managerial trends within sponsorship IDNGOs, which also work to embed similar problems.

Notwithstanding these trends, this research also suggests a variety of points of complication regarding their configuring influences, showing IDNGOs to be unequally vulnerable to them because of complexities and diversities rarely acknowledged by existing literature. These surround variations in epistemological approach, as IDNGOs strive to capitalise on sponsorship's 'direct benefit' association whilst sidestepping its manifold ethical pitfalls, balancing their commitments to recipients with fundraising imperatives and attempts to address particular ethical criticisms, within an increasingly contradictory ontological context and often facing severe economic stresses. The practical performance of these dynamics often stimulates a wealth more gaps and incoherencies (frequently devolved to sponsors through dissonances in scheme promotions), such that ethically problematic marketing techniques are not confined solely to 'direct benefit' schemes (if these can be so

distinguished), despite their current unpopularity in professional development circles.

IDNGO complexity also issues from variations in organisational size and positioning, which spark divergences in fundraising praxis and rhetorical strategy, and shape particular inter-organisational politics (e.g. of competition), affording IDNGOs different strengths and weaknesses especially regarding neoliberal environments. Rather than simple correlations drawn between large organisational scale and neoliberal co-option, and between small scale and independence, therefore, IDNGOs are shown to be implicated according to neoliberal trends and pressures in diverse ways, affording different strengths and weaknesses and stimulating a variety of managerial negotiations. Finally, I have shown that organisational ethics are irreducible to neoliberal value sets, despite these being highly and increasingly influential. Coursing through and alongside these are many other flows of care, ethical identity and senses of calling, and different types of boundary-drawing and boundary-blurring activity, making for a diverse set of ethical practices and perceptions.

Though these factors are neither exhaustive nor deterministic, each affords IDNGOs different strengths and weaknesses, and different senses of vulnerability. Importantly, they suggest that organisational space is shaped as much by individual staff members, dialogic relations with support networks and the specific contexts of each IDNGO's emergence and development, as much as by 'broader' trends and environments, and cannot (therefore) be read easily off the latter. IDNGOs are characterised by diverse, complex responses and dynamics, and are certainly equipped differently to engage with broader politico-ethical debates surrounding both child sponsorship and charity. These complexities are further explored in chapter 7, which integrates this discussion of organisational space (as well as the discussion of donation which follows in chapter 6) with theory on relational space, to construct a more nuanced account of how charitable space is structured and done.

I argue that these excesses of prevailing critiques *could* inspire more creative approaches to charity and more interesting mobilisations of Northern constituencies. Indeed, they underpin ethics which go deeper than 'do-gooderism', staff-donor relations which disturb neoliberal parameters, and

alternative readings of giving which reject colonial tropes. Whilst at present these excesses are largely failing to be translated into organisational structure and praxis in coherent, truly 'alternative' ways, I would like to briefly highlight three main drivers behind their formation (beyond the configuring axes of diversity already highlighted in this chapter): three prompts, as it were, of critical self-reflection and alternative charitable response, which provide potential platforms through which their nascent possibilities might develop.

Firstly, there are several broad environments to which child sponsorship IDNGOs are all (diversely) exposed: fierce competition, pressure for professionalisation, uncertainties stemming from the economic downturn, and fears that child sponsorship is becoming increasingly less potent as a fundraising device, being associated with saturated target communities, ageing demographics and bygone times of financial prosperity. As such, many IDNGOs in this study are currently experiencing senses of impasse, crisis and extreme concern, bringing staff to a place of self-reflection and deep questioning about future direction, and about the kind of organisation they want to collectively become. At present, these reflections are (for many) surfacing as senses of paralysis and frustration; however, they are also destabilising taken-for-granted assumptions and strategies, forcing organisations to reflect more deeply and explore alternative ways of thinking and doing their work⁸².

Secondly, and following the above, there are reactionary responses to rigid ethical frameworks and formulations, involving critique, humility, and un-learning, whether emergent in everyday encounters or in more 'official', top-down strategies. They might form *postsecular* responses to rigid boundaries of faith and secularity, emphasising instead crossover partnership and mutual learning (Grassroots staff, for instance, told of how their attitude to evangelism has changed over time, in response to both personal experience and broader cultural shifts perceived within Christendom, shifting towards a practical emphasis on serving and away from a dogmatic emphasis on verbal proselytism). They might be *postcolonial* responses to colonial dogmatism, emphasising instead humility and the importance of other voices and sources of expertise. Whatever their practical form, these responses share *postmodern*

⁸² Such sentiments were expressed strongly by staff at Global Care, Toybox, ChildAid, Child Link, Food for the Hungry UK, Grassroots.

ethical roots of humility, openness and self-reflexivity, and therefore form part of broader cultural shifts away from uncritical modernism and Western-centric Enlightenment rationalism (see also Smith, 2004). These responses are, in many ways, being circumscribed and contradicted by neoliberal trends emphasising service delivery and professionalised expertise, however moments have also been identified throughout this chapter where they acquire distinct practical significance.

Thirdly, intersecting with these broader cultural shifts and stimulations of internal organisational self-critique, there are individual staff members who are highly self-reflexive, passionately driving forward change within their own IDNGO. At Toybox, for example, the CEO spent much of his sabbatical researching other Christian IDNGOs because of his own passion to find out what makes Christians 'distinctive'. At the time of interview, this was significantly impacting his approach to work and vision for Toybox's future. Without seeking to generalise, it emerged from my own empirical work that such examples of individual reflection (whether aimed personally or corporately) are more prevalent within IDNGOs with a Christian affiliation- speculatively because the Christian faith is predicated not only on notions of truth and divine certainty, but also on constant personal (and collective) improvement and renewal, and critical self-reflection. This is not, of course, to tar all Christians with the same brush (indeed, the previous sub-section also rightly emphasises the potential of faith to prompt uncritical boundary-drawing), nor is it to deny that IDNGOs of other/no religious affiliation might also be particularly drawn to a sense of self-instability and questioning. However, it is to note an empirical pattern, and to suggest a possible explanation that Christianity affords frameworks which not only allow for critical self-reflection, but also actively encourage it.

Though not exhaustive, these three drivers and the other axes of diversity outlined in this chapter represent important ways in which the ethical potentials of charity are being co-configured in the contemporary era. In their wake, child sponsorship cannot be appraised critically as a singular entity. In some of its contemporary forms, some problematic imaginaries, roles and relations are being embedded, it must be said. But it cannot be condemned off-hand. There are instances where IDNGOs seek to overcome its baggage and use its personable appeal and encouragement of dialogue in more inspiring

ways. Whilst there is undoubtedly a long way to go, it is possible to argue that child sponsorship itself could become a platform from which to engender deeper, even politicised, engagements and dialogue with donors, rather than just tickling their interests and ensuring their financial commitment. I now turn to discussing how sponsors approach and experience giving and the sponsorship device, examining how they also exceed the simplistic narratives assigned to them by existing literatures, showing that charitable giving has a great deal more potential than is usually acknowledged.

Chapter 6: The geographies of child sponsorship donation

6.1 Introduction

I now explore how child sponsorship is practised and performed by sponsors, attending empirically to the complications presented in chapter 3 regarding common readings of charitable giving (e.g. as obligation, colonial patronage, neoliberal citizenship, ‘moral selving’). I trace donation through different stages: giving prompts and entries (6.2); giving praxis (6.3), and its transformation over time (6.4). This longitudinal structure allows for themes relating to charity and giving to be traced across all parts of the donation story.

Throughout, I draw on interviews with 57 sponsors, recruited from four particular IDNGOs to facilitate in-depth case studies. These IDNGOs were selected according to two particularly important axes of difference: size and faith basis (see 4.3), opening up comparative possibilities regarding scalar variations in scheme setup, organisational structure, culture and positioning (see chapter 5), and different types and admissions of belief, which all affect how sponsors are engaged and managed. Whilst these axes seemingly dichotomise IDNGOs according to problematic binaries (faith/secular, small/large), I allow throughout for the blurry crossovers and multiplicities involved in these designations. The four IDNGOs (and some brief contextual details) are shown in Table 6.1:

<u>IDNGO name</u>	Plan UK	Compassion UK	Kindu Trust	Grassroots
<u>No. Interviewees</u>	10	18	21	8
<u>Size/position</u>	Largest sponsorship IDNGO in the UK. National branch of Plan International. Highly professionalised.	Second-largest Christian sponsorship IDNGO in the UK. National branch of Compassion International. Highly professionalised.	Very small-scale, but increasingly professionalised.	Small-scale, informal.
<u>Focus</u>	International. Child sponsorship and various child-focused	International. Predominantly child sponsorship.	Several projects in Ethiopia, including child sponsorship.	International: four sponsorship projects and several other

	campaigns for gender equality.			welfare-related activities.
<u>Sponsorship scheme</u>	Community development-based scheme, c. 114,000 UK sponsors ⁸³ .	Proclaimed direct benefit, c.68,000 UK sponsors ⁸⁴ . Promoted with frequent reference to evangelical Christian discourses.	Direct benefit based on cash handouts, c.220 UK sponsors ⁸⁵ .	Direct benefit scheme, c.1100 UK sponsors ⁸⁶ . Offers particularly low prices (£3.50-9 pcm; most IDNGOs charge £12-25 pcm).
<u>Religious affiliation</u>	Self-identifies as secular.	Evangelical Christian.	No expressed affiliation.	Evangelical Christian.
<u>Notes</u>	Reliance on mass media for donor recruitment.	Markets within specific Christian networks and spaces, cf. the 'secular' mass media.	Most sponsors recruited through Ethiopian tourist networks, such that sponsors are personally familiar with Kindu projects and staff.	Most sponsors recruited through volunteer trips to Tanzania project, affording first-hand experience of Grassroots' work.

Table 6.1: Contextual details regarding the four case study IDNGOs used in this chapter.

Throughout the chapter, I build a critical discussion of giving and what it means to be 'charitable'. This does not only mean highlighting the complexity of giving, but also reflecting on the implications of such complexity for how charity is conceptualised and thought.

6.2 Entry

How people start giving may not, at first glance, seem as vital to understandings of charity as questions of *how* they give, or how *much* they give. Furthermore, given IDNGO efforts to market sponsorship attractively, it might be

⁸³ Supporter Relations Manager.

⁸⁴ Sponsor Relations Director.

⁸⁵ Director of Operations.

⁸⁶ Director.

presumed that processes of sponsor enrolment are *simple*, composed of empathetic responses to powerful appeals. I argue here that neither of these assumptions holds true. People become sponsors in diverse ways; virtually no interviewees signed up simply because they 'saw an ad' (nor is this pathway straightforward). Furthermore, the gift itself is fundamentally shaped by these preliminary contexts of engagement. They are, then, vitally important.

According to existing literature and popular discourse, giving prompts can be expected to embody certain themes (see also chapter 3). Firstly, they are assumed to cite senses of obligation: whether civic duty to 'society', or obligation to religion or God; people give because they feel they *should*, out of some sense of dutiful belonging. Secondly, and relatedly, giving entries are expected to affirm certain moralised senses of self (generous, Christian, etc), whether internally or through external display. Thirdly, charitable giving to international development is often cited as re-affirming colonial relations of pity and patronage. Lastly, all the above have more recently been associated with problematic neoliberal schemas of autonomous individual choice and personal responsibility, whether as rational, reflexive humanitarianism or as selfish consumerism (Lorimer, 2010). I now interrogate sponsor enrolments with regard for these narrative expectations. I firstly appraise the complex contexts which birth charitable giving, and how they intertwine with particular spatial understandings of need and responsibility. I then discuss how these contexts frame sponsors' first engagements with sponsored children. Finally, I reflect on how the complexities of sponsor 'entries' challenge and deepen prevailing expectations about charitable giving.

6.2.1 Circumstances of entry

Empirically, it is useful to divide sponsors into two broad groups based on their initial engagements. Firstly, there are those who engage first with the IDNGO, enrolling on its sponsorship programme consequently. For most of these, their commitment is largely to the organisation, rather than to sponsorship or the sponsored child. Secondly, there are those who decide to give without prior commitment to a specific organisation. I now discuss these groups in turn, examining how their parameters frame different types of charitable feeling and action.

The 'organisation-first' group is exemplified well by many Kindu Trust sponsors. Kindu has been established mostly through Ethiopia's tourist trade (see also 7.3), such that most of its sponsors have experienced its projects first-hand⁸⁷. Many interviewees, predictably, narrated their giving in relation to these encounters:

"I was wandering around Ethiopia with a rucksack on my back...I [met] this very peculiar English woman, called Kate...she was quite keen to explain to me what she did...It's not my inclination necessarily to think that handing out lots of money is necessarily terribly helpful, but having seen this extraordinary woman, Kate, and her husband, in the thick of it, living in pretty humble circumstances, and actually taking money to a family, and actually engaging with and building relationships with a family...I thought that was extraordinarily worth doing."

(Peter, Kindu sponsor)

Peter does not write letters or track the development of 'his' child; instead, his commitment is to Kindu and its staff, triggered by encountering their inspirational living. Vitally, this experience overrides Peter's prior 'inclinations' about cash-based aid, evidencing the power of such encounters to disrupt pre-existing logics surrounding charity. Similarly, for Grassroots, most of its sponsors are recruited through the personal outreach of its founders, Hugo and Sharon Anson, and other staff⁸⁸. Many Grassroots sponsors therefore narrate their giving in terms of these inspirational encounters:

"I met [Hugo and Sharon] in my late teens on an outreach project in Norfolk...I kind of knew them as youth leaders at that point. And stayed in contact throughout university...when Grassroots was set up they asked my husband to be a trustee" (Caitlin, Grassroots sponsor)

For Caitlin and many others, organisational legitimacy is quickly established through informal, face-to-face interactions. Many Grassroots sponsors therefore express little concern for sponsorship, or for reciprocal engagements with sponsored children:

"It's kind of less about which one I sponsor and more about having the contribution and thinking well, I know Sharon will spend the money where it needs to be spent...I trust her with that." (Johnny, Grassroots sponsor)

Johnny's unconditional trust leads him to relinquish claims of his own expertise, and on sponsorship's service delivery promises; demonstrating the power of his rapport with Grassroots to counter neoliberal frameworks of expectation. In all

⁸⁷ Director of Operations.

⁸⁸ Interview with Grassroots Directors.

of the above responses, commitments to sponsor are less about 'changing the life of a child' (though both Kindu and Grassroots run broadly 'direct benefit' schemes), and more about supporting inspirational others (see also Barnett et al, 2005). This is partly due to the small size of both IDNGOs, encouraging in each an informal interface with sponsors predicated on (low-cost) face-to-face encounters. The sponsorship commitment is not, therefore, always engaged with in uniformly traditional ways, here configured around contributing to an already-established effort with its own sources of agency. Thus, many sponsors who engage 'organisation-first' distance themselves from claims of ownership regarding sponsored children, recognising that the strength of their contribution does not lie in their own power to save.

The second group of sponsors experience giving impulses in ways other than via direct engagement with a particular IDNGO (this follows as a way of actioning desires to give). For instance, several were prompted to sponsor by a particularly personal, emotional experience of poverty:

Catherine: "We went out [to Ethiopia] on holiday in 2003...Hugh being a doctor asked our guide if we could just go and see the local hospital. And that's when it really hit home how desperately poor they were. It was just so shocking, so terrible, the state of the hospital was just dirty and the patients were neglected, terrible stench and we were just ugh, it's awful, no human being should have to put up with these conditions. So it sort of stayed with us really..."

Hugh: Yes, I think it was you leaving in tears that actually got me going, made me think..." (Hugh and Catherine, Plan/Kindu sponsors)

This dual response- Catherine's revulsion and Hugh's being affected by her tears -testifies to the power of traditional empathetic and affective promptings regarding the sight and smell ('stench') of suffering. These responses are not free from cultural conditioning, mobilising already-existing phenomenologies of need. Both Hugh and Catherine have Western medical professional backgrounds, for instance, and extensive prior involvements in charitable work. This frames their responses with notions of acceptable healthcare standards, sanitation and human dignity, and privileges charitable efforts as avenues through which to respond. Thus, their prompting to give is shaped by predispositions to perceive and respond to their encounter in certain ways. Other prospective sponsors, who lack 'field' experience but are prompted to give by encounters with friends, family, God, or personal circumstances, also display various interplays of affect, thoughtful consideration and presumption:

“I like to help children because I didn't have a particularly good childhood myself so it feels rewarding to me that I am helping kids in need...being a damaged child made me realize that a happy childhood is essential for a happy adult life.”
(Lizzie, Plan sponsor)

“I didn't go to Compassion because someone was shaking a bucket at me...I went to Compassion because I felt poked and prodded by God about it.” (Tony, Compassion sponsor)

These ‘encounter-first’ scenarios seem to privilege senses of personal responsibility and duty more so than ‘organisation-first’ scenarios. Furthermore, where people encounter the IDNGO secondarily, organisational legitimacy often takes longer to establish, as giving impulses are not necessarily co-productive of familiarity with the eventual IDNGO of choice⁸⁹. Indeed, prospective sponsors often put considerable effort into ‘shopping’ for the ‘right’ IDNGO:

“I did actually produce a spreadsheet of different sponsor organisations and I looked at what they provided the child and what they provided me, as in not what I got out of it, but...what part I could play in the relationship, essentially. And what the money went to...[I chose Compassion] because I thought that [other IDNGOs] were so small...I was worried my money would disappear.”
(Kat, Compassion sponsor)

Whilst Kat's effort levels were rare, the majority of interviewees appraised the background credentials of their chosen IDNGO in some way, establishing organisational legitimacy through their own methods and criteria, which often include the recommendations of trusted others and already-existing presumptions about IDNGO qualities (as Kat shows regarding organisational size).

In these examples, therefore, child sponsorship remains predominantly the domain of reflexive individual action and comparative frameworks of personal choice. Thus, those who engage with the IDNGO secondarily seemingly conform more coherently to narratives of neoliberal citizenship than those who engage ‘organisation-first’. This is not surprising, since the former must personally establish organisational legitimacy and narrow down hundreds of potential giving options, for giving to be practically achieved. Giving parameters are set personally, with IDNGOs becoming service providers that facilitate the translation of giving desires into actions. However, this process

⁸⁹ An exception: instances where giving is prompted by the recommendations of family or friends, who establish organisational legitimacy by personally endorsing a particular scheme or IDNGO. Again, these promptings might involve different configurations of affect, thought and presumption.

also spills beyond sponsors seeking the 'best deal' for themselves (see Kat's reluctance to relate her shopping to 'what I got out of it'). Complex ethical concerns become routed through the guise of individual choice, and often these choices are not made autonomously but involve influential others. Thus, coursing through processes of choice and validation are not only neoliberal values and architectures, but also deeper desires to give *well*, relational contexts which exceed the self and, often, emotive memories of experiences to which giving is, ultimately, the overflow of a generous response.

Across both groups, people engage with sponsorship in diverse, multifaceted ways that frame their perceptions of the gift (e.g. secondary outflow or primary importance) and their own agency and responsibility. That child sponsorship represents 'interested giving' is known; that it represents different types and loci of interest is less often acknowledged. This then changes how the gift is *given*, since sponsors act with reference to their [complex] giving inspirations, and configures initial levels of loyalty to IDNGOs. Some IDNGOs are therefore under more pressure than others to entice sponsor trust in creative ways. In all, giving is prompted through diverse relations, encounters and conditioning frameworks, co-configuring the initial parameters of charity.

6.2.2 Further complications

The diverse ethical prompts discussed so far themselves deserve complication. Firstly, the decision to sponsor is itself not an equal one, not least since IDNGOs vary significantly in how much they charge for sponsorship. If Grassroots sponsorship begins at £3.50 per month and Compassion sponsorship now stands at £21 per month, for instance, the types of giving commitment demanded here will often also vary (see also 6.4.1). Secondly, the distinction made at the beginning should be blurred, as most giving prompts incorporate elements of both 'organisation-first' and 'encounter-first' engagements. Charity appeals, for instance, interweave narratives of poverty and sponsorship's transformative potential with organisational branding, such that encounters therewith are impossible to designate as either 'organisation-first' or 'encounter-first'. Furthermore, the few interviewees in this study who cited IDNGO appeals as influential in their decisions to sponsor also cited

various other influences, including friends, family, God and personal circumstances:

“One day we had somebody [from Compassion] speaking at church...and I suddenly knew, ‘today’s the day Lucy, you’re going to [sponsor] another child!’ After he’d finished speaking, I just went up to the table for Compassion and [our local Compassion volunteer] gave me this [profile]- ‘that’s your child, Lucy’, and I didn’t choose, but this was the one- I just looked at her and thought ‘you are gorgeous!’...I thought yeah, this is God putting the two of us together...I came home completely rejoicing because I knew she was meant for me” (Lucy, Compassion sponsor)

Lucy’s response not only cites several promptings; but also displays the multiply productive nature of giving prompts; her donation does not only involve externally-directed giving impulses, but also various personal feedbacks (joy, relational gain, perceptions of Divine orchestration, etc). Other interviewees testified more subtly to relational gain; Peter, for instance, derives inspiration from his ‘fairytale’ encounters with Ethiopian places and peoples:

“I struck up conversation with [Kate]...she told me what she did and she said ‘please come and see me when you’re in Gondar’. So I said ‘well how will I find you?’ [She said] ‘Well all you need to do is when you walk out onto the street, you will be surrounded by lots of kids...all you have to do is say to them ‘Farange Kate’, which is foreigner Kate, and they will grab you by the hand and they will come and find me.’ I thought ‘this is absurd, this is a bit like some sort of odd fairytale!’

Anyway, in truth, when I was in Gondar...about half a dozen kids found me and grabbed me by the hand...I just simply said ‘Farange Kate’ and they truly did take me down these backstreets and there she was. Her husband, who is an Ethiopian fellow, invited me to go on a walk up into the mountains where he was going to be distributing some of the funds to families...I went with him and we stayed overnight...and I have to say I found that absolutely fascinating.” (Peter, Kindu sponsor)

As charisma is fundamentally spatial (Terlouw, 2011), so here the inspiration of Kate and her husband is linked to Peter’s exoticised experiences of Ethiopian place: his ‘fairytale’ discovery of Kate’s home, the mountain journey, his exploratory position as footloose back-packer. Both his and Lucy’s experiences testify to the variety of multidirectional ethical flows at work in decisions to give, complicating narratives of autonomous, linearly altruistic (or linearly selfish) giving by highlighting a host of ‘other others’ (Ahmed, 2002), including places, woven into giving responses. A third point of complication involves elements of self-identity framing giving decisions:

“I used to be a charity fund-raiser...so I knew the drill, essentially how it works, and I know the wastage in charities as well...[Kindu] is a very small charity, so I felt like the wastage wouldn't be too much.” (Julie, Kindu sponsor)

Julie's professional experiences with Third Sector organisations clearly condition her assessment of Kindu's validity with neoliberal assumptions about efficiency. Contrastingly, Caitlin's decision to sponsor owes particularly to her maternal experiences, mapped onto a strong sense of global inequity:

“We wanted to sponsor children abroad because...starting to be a parent...I found it quite hard to feed and clothe my own and know that other people weren't fed and clothed in the same way.” (Caitlin, Grassroots sponsor)

Thus, instead of equating to egoistic accounts of 'moral selving', giving practices are conditioned by multiple ethical commitments and norms stemming from the socio-cultural contexts within which sponsors are embedded.

Additionally, and fourthly, these examples demonstrate the routing of giving logics through broader spatial discourses of responsibility, founded particularly on dichotomous senses of inequity:

“I and my family were born on the right side of the tracks...for me personally, I feel I must give back...I've been very fortunate, blessed, and I should do the maximum I feel I can.” (Lorraine, Kindu sponsor)

“I wanted to give back, I wanted to do something really good...my child is conceived through IVF so I was extremely lucky to have her. But with the chances she's got and the help I had with bringing her into the world, what I wanted to do was help other children really.” (Delia, Grassroots sponsor)

Whether stemming from a concrete personal experience, as with Delia, or a vague sense of blessing, as with Lorraine, both these responses contain two moral moves: a grateful desire to voluntarily reciprocate (e.g. to God, to society), to balance the receipt of prosperity from without (unearned by oneself) by bestowing prosperity in response; and a routing of this reciprocation through global imaginaries of inequity, deemed undesirable. As with similar tropes evident in aid appeals (and other popular discourses), these moves dichotomise and depoliticise the world ready for charity, compounding and justifying giving impulses⁹⁰. Unsurprisingly, ever-popular in this context were generalised

⁹⁰ This is not to deny the very real inequities present in the world, but rather to note a widespread pattern whereby they are uncritically collated, stripped of political substance and heavily moralised so as to further impel and legitimise apolitical forms of 'charity'.

references to 'making a difference', wedding these vague imaginaries of inequity to equally vague senses of personal responsibility.

For many sponsors such narratives of poverty, charity and responsibility slot together easily with Christian theological frames. Some acknowledged these inspirations whilst distancing themselves from a strong religious affiliation, demonstrating the continued influence of faith-based moralities on broader British publics:

"I have to give something back. I have been blessed...I have no religious leanings...I would like to think there is something else out there. I am probably more spiritual than religious in a way, I guess." (Jo, Kindu sponsor)

F: *"Who, or what, has been the biggest influence on your attitude to charity?"*
Tom: *Probably Jesus, though I don't believe in any of the supernatural stuff. But his words are very challenging."* (Tom, Kindu sponsor)

Whilst geographical and sociological debates continue regarding supposed 'resurgences' of either religion or spirituality in the UK and Europe (e.g. Habermas, 2008; Howe, 2009; Beckford, 2012), these responses suggest the informal influence of religious teachings, personalities and ethics (as with Tom), and senses of the spiritual (as with Jo), on respondents who distance themselves formally from 'religion'. Here, these influences shape ethical stances in fragmentary ways, porously co-constituting secularised positionalities through interwoven practices of 'leaning' and distancing.

Confessing Christian respondents also, unsurprisingly, mobilised faith-based imaginaries, some in uncritical, generic ways⁹¹, others in more concrete, applied ways:

"I guess into that comes my faith, because Christ was a really relational guy. He came to save everyone, he came to save the world, and yet he spent his most focused time with the 12 disciples, he was a really relational person...[so] whatever I'm giving, I want it to be put into a relational scenario." (Kat, Compassion sponsor)

Here, the inspiration and moral weight of Jesus shapes Kat's giving strategy in a more concrete way than simply theologising broader inequities. Whilst not all Christian sponsors made similar scriptural applications, this demonstrates how

⁹¹ E.g. sponsorship was sometimes positioned as part of Christian tithing, becoming a fairly arbitrary 'good cause' through which to direct Biblically pre-rationalised rhythms of financial duty.

religious belief can be thought through and applied, rather than presumptuously framing action.

Thus, decisions to sponsor cite not only proximal relational influences, but also broader moral discourses and geopolitical imaginaries. As with ethical consumption choices, these various influences dialogically interweave, rather than responses being purely situated or purely ideological (Adams and Raisborough, 2010). Sadly, however, they are rarely politicised, and discussions of responsibility rarely extend beyond the personal. Furthermore, they are also sometimes accompanied by clearly exoticised narratives:

“[The kids in Tanzania] are happy and content with so little...it was only 100 years ago that a lot of kids in this country were like this, you have to think about where we’ve come, and it’s going to take them a lot longer, but if we can help...”
(Delia, Grassroots sponsor)

Here, simplistic Westernised teleologies uncritically configure sponsor understandings in ways which embed problematic linear accounts of developmental progress and patronage. However, some interviewees did synthesise such understandings with critique and self-reflexivity:

“[Instead of] ‘we’re white Westerners helping poor black Africans in Tanzania’, well actually when you’ve spent a week actually working with someone, you’ve kind of learned a little bit more about them...you can say...‘I’m doing this because I’ve met this person and I know a bit more about them’.” (Johnny, Grassroots)

Here, Johnny identifies a desirable shift in attitude, emergent through praxis and encounter, away from self-congratulatory colonial phenomenologies of need. Others apply similar ethics to critique particular organisational tactics:

“I don’t like [Compassion’s] normal approach of ‘here, look at all these cute babies’...but instead actually being able to say ‘look, here’s some criteria, but I don’t want to...shop for the sponsored child that I want.’” (Tony, Compassion sponsor)

Tony’s discomfort with the consumerist connotations of Compassion’s ‘photo gallery’ technique (see 5.2), a surprisingly common response, leads him to refuse the gift relation as writ by the IDNGO, reworking it with alternative (albeit fragmentary) ethics of anti-consumerism. Both Johnny and Tony demonstrate that however donors become enrolled into charitable action, their responses are often caught up with critical negotiations of its component parts.

From the very advent of the gift, therefore, notions of 'pure altruism' and linear, singular 'self-other' gift relationships are shown to be partial, romanticised narratives: giving is unavoidably caught up with sponsors and their situated contexts, in dialogic relation with broader imaginaries of responsibility. Whilst these complexities do not necessarily translate into some superior form of ethical action, they should be taken more seriously, since they clearly cannot be boxed up with allegations like 'colonial' or 'neoliberal'. Sponsors bring a wealth of complex knowledges and experiences into giving, interweaving relatively stable beliefs and predispositions with more fluid negotiations and critical tendencies. I now turn to how this dynamic context frames first encounters with sponsored children.

6.2.3 First encounters

The complex contextual influences on giving not only shape how sponsors commit to the sponsorship device, but also shape initial engagements with sponsored children. As detailed previously, for instance, those who enter sponsorship 'organisation-first' often express little interest in its 'personal' side. They often also distance themselves from mechanisms of sponsor choice allowed by the schemes:

"Kate wanted to know whether I'd be interested in choosing [a child]...I actually wanted to do something practical, and not sort of soothe my soul in a Madonna kind of way...I simply said to her, you need to tell me which of the youngsters will benefit the most from my £15 a month. You're better placed than I am, otherwise it's like going to a rescue home to choose a dog, you choose from a litter...I was a little bit anxious that this might be humiliating" (Peter, Kindu sponsor)

Peter's response exhibits a reactionary rebuttal of stereotypical colonial tropes of ownership and patronage, elevating instead a trust in staff expertise. However, not all 'organisation-first' sponsors reject the focus of their giving on one child. In particular, those who visit sponsorship projects (common within Kindu and Grassroots) often cited chance encounters with particular children or families which subsequently budded into care relationships:

"The girl I sponsor actually I met the first time I went [to Tanzania], very neglected, her mother had died, one of quite a large family. So she was the child that took my attention...she still comes to find me when I arrive and...there's a connection there...I don't particularly want to single her out too specially, but she is special to me." (Rosemary, Grassroots sponsor)

Thus, not all who encounter sponsorship ‘organisation-first’ distance themselves from their sponsored child or refute parental care relations, particularly as their giving engagements develop and take on new spatial and experiential dimensions. However, this is still likely to be synthesised with a broader responsiveness to the IDNGO which, as with Rosemary, can prompt critical delineation of appropriate levels of connection⁹².

For ‘encounter-first’ sponsors, particularly those who engage ‘at a distance’ rather than ‘in the field’, first engagements with sponsored children often conform more to neoliberal schemas of consumer choice, a precedent for which is established through processes of finding a suitable IDNGO. Thus, sponsors often also make some specification about the sponsored child (most IDNGOs offer choices regarding location and gender, some also offer age). Whilst respondents from this study will not necessarily be representative of broader trends in sponsorship praxis, two particular themes did emerge regarding such specification. These themes regard *processes* of choice, rather than the substantives of choice, since no particular continents, genders or ages were obviously popular⁹³. Firstly, several respondents choose the characteristics of their sponsored child based on a desire for commonality, to ‘relate more’ so the connection is more beneficial to both parties. Thus, several expressed preferences for a child of the same gender as themselves or their own [grand]children, or a child of a similar age to their own [grand]children; or a child from a place of which they have some prior knowledge or experience:

“The reason as to why I chose a child from China is that as a child, my baby sitter was Chinese/Vietnamese and I spent most of my childhood with them, and as a result I became quite embedded in their culture...I personally think that

⁹² At this point, it bears noting the apparent frequency with which sponsors visit sponsored children. These sponsors cannot be easily packaged up into narratives of a cosmopolitan middle class of neoliberal consumers who can afford such visits, however. For one thing, the propensity for giving and visiting to be intertwined varies hugely with IDNGO (it is pro rata much more common at Kindu than at Compassion, for instance), a theme discussed further in chapter 7. For another, not all visits involve benevolent sponsors ‘parachuting in’ to condescendingly visit ‘their’ child: Grassroots, for instance, runs trips to its Tanzania project during which members adopt quasi-staff roles and spend three weeks collecting data about the projects. Many trip-goers, staff informed me, decide during the trip to not make themselves known to their sponsored child(ren), out of respect for the other children and realisation that their sponsorship connection is not of central importance to the project. Thus, and as Johnny’s response (above) shows, the visits frequently become disruptive, rather than reproductive, of Western-centric assumptions, identities and imaginaries.

⁹³ If anything, ‘Africa’ was treated preferentially, showing the continued influence of long-standing Westernised imaginaries of need, though this was not a strong trend.

when you are familiar with a particular culture it [is] easier for you to build rapport with the sponsored child.” (Thalia, Plan sponsor)

Similarly, some also desired to contribute to an established community link (e.g. church members focusing their sponsorships on the same project or area), to foster communal dialogue and relational support. These responses display a dual concern, often communally rooted, to maximise the benefits of sponsorship for both sponsors and sponsored children.

Secondly, many sponsors guide their choices based on perceptions of particular categories being less popular than others, seeking to redress imbalances in the landscape of charity by favouring those deemed unfavourable. This commonly translates into girls being chosen based on perceptions of global gender imbalances, older children being chosen based on perceptions of younger ‘cuter’ age groups being favoured, and locations outside of Africa being chosen because of perceived imbalances in global aid distribution. Conversely, out of similar ethical concerns, many more sponsors *relinquish* their choice to the IDNGO, asking to sponsor whoever/wherever needs it most, acting from both recognition that they are not experts, and a normative, other-regarding concern that giving be oriented around ‘real’ need (cf. the whims of their own benefaction).

Often these various desires, concerns, imaginaries and negotiations are multiply, fluidly present within each sponsoring decision:

“I wanted to sponsor a child in South America, because I’ve been to South America and I think it’s a really cool continent...the whole African famine poverty pity-party is thrust upon charitable givers in the West quite a lot...there are other places that are just as needy; perhaps they’re not being given to as much because people think that all the poverty in the world is in Africa...I went on the website and I spent a lot of time looking at all these children...I thought I would be able to connect easier to a girl, I’d have more to say to her...so I had a girl picked out because she was cute...and then just before I clicked ‘I would like to sponsor this child’ I thought that’s totally superficial, that’s not the way God would do it because He loves every single one of them. So I closed the tab and I did the ‘select a random one’, and I thought I’ll have the first one that comes from South America.” (Kat, Compassion sponsor)

Here, Kat mobilises diverse ethical frames simultaneously, including her personal attachment to South America, perceptions of global aid imbalances and assumptions about gender-based rapport. Finally, there is her visual selection of a ‘cute’ child, only to decry this as morally and theologically

unsound. Together, and like the processes of sponsor choice identified above, these processes are seemingly archetypal of neoliberal charity, combining both consumerist, self-oriented choices and reflexive humanitarianism (see Lorimer, 2010), mobilising uncritical assumptions (e.g. about gender) in the process. However, this needs to be troubled, not least because Kat partially relinquishes her power to choose upon critical reflection and in response to other ethico-spiritual prompts.

Thus, whilst sponsorship may privilege neoliberal schemas of choice, these do not preclude responsive interactions, prompting sponsors to move beyond pre-formed logics and assumptions. More broadly, few respondents utilised their power to choose in ways which unashamedly centralise their own egos or their own enjoyment of the experience, though obviously any embrace of choice imposes conditions on the gift. Instead, I was surprised by the extent to which choice was either synthesised with diverse concerns to give well, or relinquished out of ethical discomfort.

Depending on how donors encounter sponsorship, then, first encounters with sponsored children can be diverse. Whilst there is some correlation between organisation-first encounters and self-distancing from sponsorship, and between device-first encounters and embrace of personal feedback and choice; the dynamics involved here are often more complex than even these designations allow, involving other relations, ethical concerns and strains of criticality. Charitable action owes to complex sets of influences which cannot be condensed into uncritical empathy, despite IDNGO promotions frequently suggesting otherwise.

6.3 Sustaining the gift

I now examine how sponsorship is practised and performed once sponsors enrol. Sponsorship stands apart from most charitable schemes in its allowance of heightened, regular donor interactions with the process after the initial giving decision, rather than forming a one-off gift or purely financial commitment. This section begins by examining sponsor performances of the gift and the sponsor-child connection, then exploring how these performances

interweave with sponsors themselves. Finally, I discuss how charitable activity becomes co-productively embedded in sponsors' everyday socio-spatial contexts. Throughout, I appraise assumptions that giving performances are predicated on egoistic self-production and display, as well as individualistic, Western-centric ideas of 'global citizenship', or- not always far removed – colonial tropes of patronage. I end by reflecting critically on these allegations.

6.3.1 Performances of the gift and gift relation

Traditionally, sponsorship allows communication between sponsor and sponsored child, through letters and gifts⁹⁴. IDNGOs vary in how they allow, encourage and seek to govern this communication (see chapter 5); furthermore, sponsors engage with it diversely. I now explore these diverse engagements, asking what kinds of care they perform. I first discuss sponsors who embrace dialogue opportunities, and then those who are more reluctant.

For some sponsors, dialogue with sponsored children forms an unquestioned opportunity to extend friendship, love and encouragement to recipients:

“They just want to hear from you, that you love them and believe in them. Even if they have a parent that loves them, there’s so much in their environment that tells them the opposite...They need to believe their circumstances can change...not only from the parents and the church but also from the sponsor. Those words of encouragement can be a lifeline.” (Gabby, Compassion advocate)

Compassion advocate Gabby read this quote (from a sponsor-authored article) to inspire other sponsors during a group letter-writing session, mingling its assertions with organisational endorsements. Problematically, in speaking for sponsored children, it romanticises gift relations, depoliticising poverty as circumstantial. It is, however, emotively powerful. Unsurprisingly given such endorsements, therefore, embrace of dialogue opportunities by sponsors often involves significant caring interest:

“She’s lost a tooth! So she’s looking a little bit gappy in our latest picture of her! Veronica is currently 6, her birthday is the 16th September. She likes pink, um, she has a brother and a sister, she was two parents, they live about 6 miles out of Cochiabamba...She likes playing with dolls...She likes attending church,

⁹⁴ Increasingly, IDNGOs are also allowing communication by email, though this is still filtered through layers of management to monitor content.

apparently she's a tambourine fanatic!...She's very good at colouring in and drawing..." (Kat, Compassion sponsor (unprompted by any written information))

To whatever extent this assemblage of information owes to a predisposition on Kat's part to notice particular descriptors, or to the privileging of such themes by IDNGOs because of assumptions about what sponsors want to/should hear (e.g. project staff might assume that evangelical Christian sponsors want to hear about their sponsored child's church attendance); Kat's interest arguably expresses more about the cultural norms of Northern, Christian development constituencies than about sponsored children. Similarly, Lucy describes her receipt of letters through self-affirming mobilisations of maternal care:

"One day I had a letter from Enara...the translation [was] 'I want to meet a generous person like you are', and ooooh I just wanted to go [to her], that just really touched me!! When this picture came with her great grin I just loved it, I thought 'Enara I'm coming', I don't know when but what I would love to do is go and hug them and tell them how precious they are to me." (Lucy, Compassion sponsor)

Whilst these pro-dialogue responses might be critiqued for their uncritical cultural assumptions and moral self-reinforcements, they are also more complex. Lucy's expressions of love invoke senses of open welcome which exceed the potentially patronising, 'selving' qualities of her response; Kat positions the child not as an object of pity, but as a subject of her caring advances, with her own character and talents. Thus, such critiques fail to capture the complexity of sponsor perspectives.

Such attachments also prompt creative practical engagements with letter-writing and gift-sending opportunities:

"This is the Clipart that comes with the programme, animals, weather...if you haven't got a computer, you've got stickers...and just decorate around the edge [of the letter], you can cut the edges with scissors to make it look nice, just to make it attractive for the child...And in the National Geographic...there are all sorts of interesting little pictures and you can just decorate the edge of [letters with them]." (Gabby, Compassion advocate/sponsor)

These performances exceed caring obligation, showing immense effort being put in, oriented around pleasing the sponsored child. Even these efforts, however, contain myriad assumptions about the value and suitability of particular types of communication: Clipart, stickers, National Geographic images. These aesthetic details are not covered by organisational guidelines, instead being filtered largely through sponsors, invariably leading to

fragmentary, unsystematic layers of critique being mobilised (e.g. Gabby advised sponsors to avoid ‘fighty’ [i.e. military themed] stickers as these are not appropriate, yet uncritically valorised National Geographic imagery). These subtle dispositional interactions normalise and embed prevailing cultural assumptions about charity as much as large-scale discourses.

Amidst flows of cultural assumption, sponsors nevertheless often integrate desires to care with strong critical concerns to care appropriately:

“I started out sending one [letter] every month but I didn’t receive one back that often, so I thought right, I don’t want to send lots...I just didn’t want it to be a pressure on them?...So I reduced the number of letters I was sending...I try not to write...about things she might not have...you have to be very careful about what you say...but there’s so much potential for good, for building up, for encouraging, that we just have to step carefully.” (Kat, Compassion sponsor)

Sponsors do not always practise the gift relation blindly, therefore, assuming that their approaches are right and good. Instead, dynamic responsiveness (though often necessarily predicated on speculation, as with Kat’s reference to ‘being a pressure’) can course through charitable praxis.

Such positive embraces of sponsor-child dialogue, to whatever extent laced with criticality, are often undergirded ideologically by Christian discourses⁹⁵. For instance, 1:1 care relationships are intrinsically validated by Christian centralisations of personal connection with God, through Jesus (Bornstein, 2001). These connections are also often read by sponsors as focuses for evangelism, understood by many as vitally part of (if not the point of) the gift:

“I always leave a lot of space to tell them how precious they are in the sight of God and that Jesus loves them and I give them Bible verses...I wasn’t brought up with the love of God, and I found Him in an amazing way...honestly I wouldn’t be here if it hadn’t been for Him, so honestly if you can give that to anybody, any child, then you do the best [thing] you can do.” (Lucy, Compassion sponsor)

As Lucy’s narrative shows, evangelistic drives involve diverse practices and do not always conform to stereotypically problematic demands for conversion, forming instead a way in which sponsors share their lives with sponsored

⁹⁵ This is not to single out Christians as more likely to embrace letter-writing, nor to neglect the commitments put into sponsorship by sponsors of other religious persuasions, but to identify Christian theoretical tools as often mobilised particularly coherently to frame and legitimise sponsor-child communication.

children, and practise love, encouragement and generosity, as much as 'an agenda'. These opportunities for overlapping sponsorship's 'relational' elements with Christian discourses are not always embraced comfortably or uncritically by sponsors who self-identify as Christian, however:

"There are those that feel that Compassion bribes children into being taught about Christianity by exploiting their vulnerability...and that this is unethical. As a psychologist I have some sympathy with their point of view, however as a Christian, I feel that Compassion is perfectly justified in presenting children with what will very possibly be their only opportunity to hear about Jesus. As adults, they will be free to make their own choice." (Charlotte, Compassion sponsor)

Charlotte's discomfort evidences a particular tension between traditional evangelicalism and postsecular modes of thought and action (whereby attempts to convert are laid aside, see Cloke et al (2005)). This suggests that Christian cultures and identities are not necessarily even or smooth, but can be characterised by critical self-reflection and internal conflict. Thus far then, sponsors who embrace opportunities for dialogue with sponsored children can interweave attentive care with both pre-dispositional assumptions and critical negotiations.

For other sponsors, similar levels of commitment exist, but in more practically attuned forms less dependent on romanticised notions of individual friendship. When sponsors visit sponsorship projects, particularly, unusually high levels of practical care can be allowed:

"I take things out for their youth group...when I go out I always take the Kindu team out for a meal, all together, because they're all so welcoming when we go, so it's like a way of paying them back and giving them a treat." (Sarah, Kindu sponsor)

Sarah's experience highlights the Kindu Trust's informal organisational culture, which allows sponsors to respond personally to specific needs of sponsored children:

"A few years ago we found out that the roof was leaking on the house of the children...and we asked the Trust if there was anything we could do to get a new roof put on, and they actually rebuilt the whole house for us, we paid for it, they supervised the work, got the whole house rebuilt, put a window in where there wasn't one, put a door on where there wasn't one...I went out and saw it all finished, and then went out and bought new furniture for them." (Sarah, Kindu sponsor)

Sarah provides one of many sponsor narratives of 'seeing a need' and collaborating creatively with the Trust to respond. Though invoking similar levels of commitment, her narrative starkly contrasts those of Compassion and Plan sponsors, whose engagements are more prescribed by organisational bureaucracy, and rarely involve personal visits. Thus, though these IDNGOs all encourage sponsor-child dialogue, each encourages different types of care. In many ways, strains of colonial philanthropy are visible in Kindu Trust responses, where benefactors demand a more central role in deciding how charity is disseminated. How Kindu manages sponsor engagements alongside its own professional expertise, and what imaginaries of development are encouraged in the process, are therefore themes deserving of critical appraisal here. However, more positively, Kindu's open, collaborative culture counters (to some extent) professionalised, consumerist charity trends where sponsorship is a fixed product that donors can take or leave. This emphasises sponsorship's potential to exceed neoliberal giving frameworks and, if approached appropriately, also those critiqued by postcolonial thought.

Whether through letters, gifts or visits, therefore, sponsorship prompts surprisingly diverse caring engagements. Not all sponsors, however, choose to invest in the gift relation thus. Many, particularly those who enter sponsorship 'organisation-first' (see 6.2) purposefully avoid engaging 'personally' with sponsored children:

"I don't feel like I have any claim on him just because I'm able to give him some money. So I kind of feel like there's a temptation to be sort of too paternalistic as if you're like adopting an orang-utan somewhere...I think it would be an odd relationship." (Millie, Kindu sponsor)

Millie's concern seemingly stems from a postcolonial discomfort with sponsorship's possessive connotations. Others did not express discomfort, but rather disinterest; several Kindu and Grassroots sponsors could not even remember the names of their sponsored children. For many more, sponsorship settles into their lives rather mundanely. Whether or not they set out with the intention to correspond regularly, 'life takes over' and sponsorship goes on the back burner, remembered only when direct debits are taken from bank accounts, or when letters arrive in the post:

“I have been...not necessarily deliberately stand-offish with it but I’ve just kind of let it rumble, you know, [life] gets busy and all that sort of thing. I wouldn’t say I have a relationship with the child necessarily.” (Julie, Kindu sponsor)

Arguably, this propensity to fade into the background may well circumscribe whatever potential sponsorship has to challenge sponsors and provoke debate and critical reflection. However, even in such circumstances, sponsor experiences can be flush with intense self-reflection. For Helen, this produced guilt and embarrassment, such that senses of difference between her and her sponsored child became insurmountable barriers to communication:

“I don’t have a regular sort of family, I think he was a Catholic kid and he had sort of proper mum and dad together and everything...it was a very nuclear setup. I just left [the letter-writing] thinking ‘oh I’ve just split up with a partner, now I’ve split up with another partner!!’...then it just became embarrassing because I left it, and...it never happened.” (Helen, Plan sponsor)

Instead of uncritically imposing Westernised parameters on sponsor-child dialogue to translate care across distance, Helen allows her experience of irrevocable difference to paralyse communication. To read these sorts of situations simply as absent or failed care, therefore, obscures these intricate dynamics which re-read charitable praxis as an uneven space of discomfort and negotiation. Thus, the apparent variety in sponsor engagements testifies not only to the different ways in which people enter giving, and to variations in IDNGO governance of giving praxis, but also to complex perceptions regarding the gift relationship and its difficulties. Sponsors do not uncritically embrace one kind of giving engagement, but each weaves different types of belief, moral principle, predisposition and critical reflection into their giving.

6.3.2 Involvements of the self

Since no gift is purely altruistic (see chapter 3), all sponsors can be viewed as wrapped up and invested in their giving in some way, whether or not they take an active interest. I now turn to these self-involvements, and the different ways in which sponsors respond to them, mobilising this critically to revisit narratives of ‘moral selving’ and consumer self-interest.

Self-involvement in giving, contrary to donor fears of ‘selfish’ charity, surfaces in a variety of complex ways. Elements of self-identity might become interwoven with giving praxis; for instance, many sponsors actively deploy

sponsorship as part of their practice of parenthood, investing in the education of their own children:

“So we’ve got two children ourselves, so we encourage them to save up their money as well, to buy Christmas presents for [the sponsored children]...anything over 10p we save, then we can just change it up and buy them a gift...it helps them see the bigger picture, what money's like, what culture's like.” (Sam, Grassroots sponsor)

Here, sponsorship becomes partially owned and practised by children, interwoven with parental attempts to inculcate particular types of moral imaginary, self-perception and behaviour based on frameworks of personal blessing and responsibility. Here, through the gift, an important set of imaginaries about the world are produced and embedded, and particular relational configurations (e.g. family) are normatively performed. Similarly, sponsorship can become a *substitute* for parenthood: *“As I am a single person sponsoring children gives me the children I never had”* (Melissa, Compassion); *“I was unable to have children of my own and wanted to do something that contributed to the development of children elsewhere”* (Margot, Kindu). Here, there seems to be even greater potential for the exacerbation of tropes of parental (in these cases maternal) patronage, whereby sponsored children are developed and disciplined into the likeness of the Western parent (see Repo and Yrjola, 2011). Sponsorship also seemingly fulfils an emotional, relational need for these sponsors, performatively substituting certain relations deemed desirable or normal. This re-affirms narratives of charity as self-productive and as uncritically reifying particular care-giving norms, though caught up with other-oriented desires to express and give care.

Others bring their career expertise into giving (see also 6.2.2). Kindu and Plan sponsors Hugh and Catherine Sharp, for instance, since retiring, have become involved in a number of development projects in Ethiopia, of which sponsorship is part. Hugh brings into this work his expertise as a doctor, continuing to practise wherever possible, extending his working life and blurring it with performances of active, pro-social retirement. Thus, his giving unfolds in dialogic relation to his own skills and self-identity.

In addition to careers, sponsors often frame their giving with reference to their own characters. Many Christian sponsors, for instance, positioned giving as both a response to, and a vehicle of, God's sanctifying work in the self⁹⁶:

"God has been healing me from a long way back, from stuff that was never ever sorted...over the years I have enjoyed [sponsoring] more and more because there's more of me to give, there's more of me [with which] to love." (Lucy, Compassion sponsor)

For Lucy, sponsorship becomes woven into her Christian journey not simply as dutiful Biblical obedience or evangelistic opportunity, but as an outflow of (and contributory to) ongoing God-guided self-development. Rather than equating simplistically to egoism, however, this self-improvement is given back into the charity process. Furthermore, it is not always a comfortable experience; several sponsors told of how particular character traits make giving difficult, and have to be purposefully negotiated:

"Relational commitment is something I find difficult at times...[sponsoring] is one way that I'm working through that with God...that's not the reason why I'm doing it...but it has helped me in that particular problem...as [Apostle] Paul says we're pressing towards a goal that we're not necessarily going to reach, but we're deepening our faith all the time and God's revealing to us constantly things that aren't right that need sorting. We're never there...but we push towards that."
(Kat, Compassion sponsor)

This re-reads giving as the stuff of personal challenge and purposeful virtuous becoming, or 'pushing towards'. Rather than faith forming pre-existing parameters which uncritically predispose thought and action, here it forms an ongoing discovery through praxis, predicated on self-vulnerability. Thus, a more substantial view of faith-based action is needed, to account for the negotiated ways in which faith is lived.

Charitable action therefore becomes inextricably routed through lenses of selfhood and personal experience. This seemingly affirms narratives of 'moral selving' through charity (whether involving spiritual, moral or emotional gain), affirming particular giving identities. For instance, many sponsors admitted gleaning comfort from the 'insights' of sponsorship, emphasising the importance of *knowing* that their money is making a positive difference:

⁹⁶ Such self-development through other-regarding praxis is not the domain of Christians only, but was more common amongst self-confessed Christian respondents, conceivably because Christianity encourages this type of self-conception in relation to giving. Sponsors with no religious affiliation were, on the whole, more likely to decry it as 'selfish'.

“You can picture where that money's going, and what that's going to actually help. If you're just giving it to the charity, you don't really know where it's going.”
(Marg, Grassroots sponsor)

Marg's response testifies to emotional feedback of surety gained by laying service delivery claims on sponsorship, in her case routed through neoliberal concerns for transparency stemming from notions of good stewardship. Such responses are rarely recognised as conditions or personal gains, however, evidencing a broader neoliberal conditioning to uncritically desire or expect certain feedbacks from charity, widespread amongst respondents (and clearly encouraged by sponsorship appeals). Similarly, others referenced a sense of empowerment derived from sponsorship's individual focus, enabling them to 'do their bit' to tackle larger issues:

“[It's] the feeling that I'm changing the world for individual children. Without organisations like Compassion there would be so little one person could do.”
(Rebecca, Compassion sponsor)

Again, this response emphasises sponsorship's feel-good factor, egoistically salving senses of disillusionment and paralysis regarding global problems, through recourse to notions of individual responsibility, made a plausible foundation for ethical action by sponsorship's emphasis on personal connection. However, such feedbacks of surety and empowerment are frequently tempered by caveats of critical discomfort from sponsors- 'that's not the reason I'm doing it' -involving active attempts to put the self second. Giving is also admitted to be a more turbulent experience than simple narratives of self-gain suggest:

“I have gone through a lot of different emotions...the whole feeling that you're acquiring a new member of your family, that you're gaining a friend, the excitement when letters come, the disappointment when the relationship hasn't developed as fast as you hoped, but then the resolve that you were probably being overambitious with the rate at which you expected things to progress...”
(Kat, Compassion sponsor)

Whilst Kat's emotions clearly evidence romanticised assumptions, they also point to sponsor attachments which exceed narratives of consumerism (e.g. resolve, revising expectations). Thus, it would be hasty to label sponsorship as purely about self-gain. Furthermore, some sponsors recognise and renounce self-gain through sponsorship as morally unacceptable:

“I still think that people can act charitably but with a sort of selfish motivation behind it...are they in some way helping themselves by knowing that this is the face of the person they're helping?...the [sponsor] has that sort of emotional

return where they can say actually 'I think I've helped that person'...I'm now of the opinion that [the money] needs to be used wherever it needs to be used...I'm quite happy for someone else who knows a little bit more about it to spend the money however it needs to be spent." (Johnny, Grassroots sponsor)

Here, a reactionary rebuttal of 'selfish' charity leads Johnny to relinquish sponsorship's opportunities for donor choice and active involvement. Such self-distancing often, however, involves aspiration towards 'pure' altruism, rather than recognising the inevitability of self-involvement in giving:

"I'm not doing it to get anything...[Sponsorship is] for the child and not for yourself, i.e. don't do it if it's only going to inflate your own ego." (Adam, Kindu sponsor)

"I mean it's really simply a sort of charitable act rather than anything personal." (Matthew, Kindu sponsor)

Adam and Matthew filter self-involvement through modernist frameworks of ethical subjectivity (see also Cloke et al, 2005), regarding the self as able to remain separate from giving. Thus, critiques of the egoistic connotations of charity here involve reactionary recourse to similarly unhelpful models of subjectivity, such that the intertwining of self with other is both denied and decried. Critiques of egoism do not rely intrinsically on modernist conceptions, however. Other sponsors employ postmodern frameworks, identifying tension between their desire to help and fear of imposing conditions and cultural assumptions on others. This still leads to self-distancing from sponsorship, but in a way which subtly acknowledges the inevitability of self-involvement:

"I don't have any control over his life, and I don't want to, I feel like what I'm doing is acknowledging some sort of great injustice, but I don't want to make him feel obliged to be in touch with me, or thank me." (Millie, Kindu sponsor)

Thus, whilst sponsors often critically recognise the potential for self-involvement in charity to form a negative ethical prospect, their responses vary ontologically, changing how they perceive giving and their own role as sponsor. However, and finally, not all critiques of neo-colonial egoism lead to reactionary self-distancing. Some sponsors recognise and negotiate their self-involvement by drawing lines between 'good' and 'bad' self-involvement, judging giving accordingly:

"You can't get away from the fact that you're going to feel good about helping someone. And there's nothing wrong with that, but if you're doing it just for that buzz, then I think it's a problem...I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve

someone like this. And I think humbling your own Western self is important. I'm no better than [my sponsored child]." (Tony, Compassion sponsor)

Tony, who actively engages with letter-writing, suggests here that donor feelings of anxiety and unease regarding egoism can be negotiated without attempts to excise the self, instead mobilising notions of humility and servitude to address the power imbalances within the gift relation. His response reflects a move, though partial, to critically think through broader cultural assumptions about charity without giving up on its potential for good, and without recourse to either problematic notions of pure altruism or postcolonial paralysis.

In sum, the sponsorship gift is unavoidably caught up with giving subjects, often in ways which re-affirm and embed other axes of identity. The ways in which this plays out are understandably diverse, and involve self-gain being acknowledged and managed with different degrees of comfort and clarity. Most ethically promising would seem engagements where sponsors employ attitudes of critical self-reflection and openness to being challenged and changed. It is these attitudes, rather than those of uncritical embrace or self-distancing, which make for the most interesting, responsive negotiations, especially when synthesised with generous concerns to 'go-beyond' the self (Cloke, 2002).

6.3.3 Everyday contexts and socialities

Not only is charitable practice inseparable from the self, it also becomes integrated with everyday spaces, relations and ethical concerns. Turning to these, I now explore how sponsorship becomes invested spatially and relationally in ways which are not scripted into the device, arguing that charity is multiply, dialogically embedded in dynamic relational contexts. The following sub-section critically discusses broader implications of this 'ethical embeddedness' (Hall, 2011) for discussions of charity.

In a wealth of creative ways, sponsorship becomes materially and practically embedded in sponsor lives: photographs of children adorn window sills, and suitable gifts are sought as part of shopping routines:

"I try to write regularly, to pray for them, their pictures are up in our living room, whenever we go anywhere we try and pick them up something, a postcard or a picture, and we try to remember their birthdays and Christmas." (Lottie, Compassion sponsor)

Not dissimilarly to ventures like alternative gifts or Tearfund's 'Toilet Twinning' scheme, sponsorship is here displayed within daily life in ways which regularly remind Lottie to care, and allow for others to notice and engage. Barnett et al (2005: 31; 38) argue that such performances firstly govern the self, "*making one's own life a project of self-cultivation*"; and secondly govern others, displaying ethical credentials to friends and family, to whatever extent this self-display is about 'moral selving' (it need not be).

Just as sponsorship becomes integrated into daily environments, so these also proffer situated knowledges which shape giving. Compassion sponsor Lucy writes out Bible verses and song lyrics in Portuguese to her Brazilian sponsored child, using resources given her by her Brazilian son-in-law. Such creative giving engagements challenge neoliberal conceptions of sponsors as consumers, rather than active shapers of the charity process. Furthermore, everyday contexts also invest giving practices with 'ordinarily ethical' concerns (Barnett et al, 2005), whether for managing household budgets, sourcing interesting materials or finding bargains:

"These postcards, they have them in Waterstone's at the moment, but you can get them in garden centres, they're lovely...Bookmarks...I mean you can just put this in a letter and say 'I saw this and I thought of you'...Colouring books...if you want to make it last...just take the pages out and send some pages." (Gabby, Compassion advocate/sponsor)

The decision-making processes involved here are clearly saturated with complex layers of care and concern. However, they also evidence myriad presumptions (e.g. about the cultural content of postcards, bookmarks, colouring books), and are thus not free from cultural conditioning.

Everyday contexts also shape sponsor *understandings* of giving; for instance, the monetary commitment of sponsorship was sometimes justified through comparison to mundane or unessential purchases and activities: "*It's a round of drinks in the pub*" (Peter, Kindu), "*it's a takeaway every week, and think how much healthier we would all be*" (Annie, Compassion), "*it's a latte and a bun really, isn't it*" (Delia, Grassroots). This familiarises giving, rendering it more accessible by routing it, again uncritically, through everyday frames and norms. The everyday also provides a source of personal experience from which sponsors transfer caring principles and logics across to sponsorship:

“I was with [my brother] in a car, the other day, and we saw a hitch-hiker, and I was like ‘oh, we can pick him up!’ And [my brother] was like ‘...why?’ We’re from the same family, we’re brought up the same...but his attitude to helping other people is different to mine...I don’t think it’s right to consider myself better than someone standing on the side of the road with their thumb up, in the same way as I can’t consider myself better than someone who’s across the world, born a little less lucky than me.” (Tony, Compassion sponsor)

Tony’s response shows that daily contexts and relations are not purely the scope of cultural predisposition, nor are they romantically without difficulty, but that they can involve friction and negotiation such that their intersections with charity are not pre-given.

Thus, sponsorship becomes variously framed by and practised through landscapes of the proximal, familiar and (often) familial. The other side of this is that sponsorship co-produces these social fabrics. Already discussed, for instance, are parent-child relationships, whereby sponsorship becomes imbued with another set of parental power relations as sponsors seek to educate their own children. Similarly, two Plan interviewees were headmistresses of primary schools, where child sponsorship provides a collective device that extends their schools’ charitable work whilst being of educational interest, becoming both practically and materially part of school life and identity (see also Figure 6.1):



Figure 6.1: Part of school display about sponsored child, Primary A.

“The display on Tarko [is] very much part of the school. We use it to say ‘this is what your money is going towards’...If they’re looking at landscapes we can say ‘look at this, this is where Tarko lives’, you know, ‘what can you see? Can you see many houses?’” (Louise, headmistress, Primary A)

“It fits in [to school curricula] as part of our community cohesion element...we do need a sort of wider view on the

world...And once a year, we have a week where we have a specific focus on the global, on the global community, and that’s when we do more work on [sponsorship]...they get a feel for [the sponsored child], similarities between his life and their life, and also the differences...” (Esther, headmistress, Primary B)

These quotes display some interesting interrelations between charitable activity, educational agendas and prevailing politico-ethical orthodoxies, teaching children from an early age to view the world in certain ways, and connecting into long-standing IDNGO 'development education' agendas targeting schools (see Smith, 1999; 2004). Louise's narrative shows that this involves particular visual comparisons between North and South, reinforcing singular, uncontested constructs of need and development. Both respondents also conflate sponsorship with educational curricula in ways which uncritically embed charity as a prevailing mode of North-South relation. Unlike Smith's (2004) notes about the ways in which schools mobilise 'development' and 'charity' in contradictory ways, therefore, here the emphasis seems to be more consistently on stereotypically 'charitable' tropes and modes of engagement. Furthermore, Esther's response shows how sponsorship is put to work producing global citizens, co-opting charity into prevailing neoliberal discourses of responsibility. Similarly, Louise later explained how sponsorship becomes interwoven with multiple rhythms and activities conspiring together to produce good (global, generous, active, healthy) citizens:

"The children every half-term design a new wake-up-shake-up...it was a Labour government initiative to get children fit, every morning the children do exercises to music. So we said all our sports team can design a routine and teach it to the rest of the school. And in the next half-term they can dance it, and the money [for child sponsorship] comes from the fact that it's a mufti day, the children pay money to do the mufti...It has its own momentum really, every half-term, that's what we're doing." (Louise, headmistress, Primary A)

This particular anecdote demonstrates cogently how sponsorship is deployed for multiple citizenship projects, co-producing various senses of community (e.g. sports team, school, nation, West, world) whether through educational curricula, government initiatives, half-termly routines or daily interactions. Whilst both headmistresses admitted being pleased that this also benefits the sponsored children⁹⁷, this seemed a by-product of an activity which largely represents an educational device for their own schoolchildren. Though displaying sponsorship's propensity to become multiply meaningful, therefore, the potential of sponsorship to stimulate critical reflection regarding development is here co-opted into hegemonic state discourses and longer-standing practices of

⁹⁷ Neither displayed any awareness of Plan's community development sponsorship scheme, this organisational attempt to move away from patronising, individualistic tropes going unnoticed.

'worlding' according to assumed Western norms, orienting citizenly engagements around traditional, apolitical 'charity' rather than a more politicised sense of interdependence (see Baillie Smith, 2008).

Importantly, these uncritical conflation are arguably underscored by IDNGO attempts to specifically target schools, synthesising sponsorship with their particular characteristics and rhythms. IDNGOs often produce resources tailoring sponsorship to particular curricula or age groups, for instance. At ActionAid, sponsoring schools receive "*downloadable lesson plans, sample school newsletter and school development plan, a free ActionAid teacher talk once a year, a termly e-newsletter containing links to new educational resources and fundraising ideas, [and] free stickers, balloons and badges to help your fundraising*"⁹⁸. Whilst such attempts to govern sponsoring schools may not always uncritically embed problematic discourses about the world, my experience with the two Plan-sponsoring schools suggests that the space such material makes for productive, democratic dialogue tends to be highly circumscribed in the context of primary schools, not least because of teacher demands for simple messages for young children and practical school constraints (e.g. small resource bases).

These examples join those of family, community groups and churches (see 7.5.2) to place charitable action within a wealth of other communal projects, and collective senses of moral becoming and belonging. I now relate these insights about the everyday spaces and socialities of sponsorship to charitable praxis more broadly.

6.3.4. Discussion: valorising the charitable everyday

If child sponsorship intertwines dialogically with complex social spaces rather than being the domain of discrete individuals, what implications follow for narratives of charity? Firstly, sponsorship co-produces many other ethical relations and contexts not scripted into the device, which lie (to some extent) beyond organisational management. This prompts a conceptual revision of simple, linear understandings of donation to allow for its other ethical and relational rhythms and investments. These often uncritically embed cultural

⁹⁸ ActionAid UK website, <http://www.actionaid.org.uk/schools-child-sponsorship/child-sponsorship-faq>, accessed 25/06/13.

norms and moral frameworks, but also come to life in other-regarding encounters which always have the potential to 'go beyond' these.

Secondly, and consequently, the gift itself becomes routed through and framed by these complex contexts. In the schools, sponsorship becomes oriented around particular educational projects and teaching parameters, shaping the material and practical performance of sponsorship and apprehending recipient others through frameworks of education, citizenship and school life. These proximal contexts thus provide logics and frameworks through which giving is made both accessible and meaningful. The problem with these frames of familiarity, however, is that they seemingly encourage the uncritical imposition of particular assumptions (e.g. about childhood, the 'Third World', personal responsibility), circumscribing sponsorship's potential to prompt more politicised reflections. Nonetheless, their predication on encounter also houses potential for surprise and disruption: their ordinariness need not equate to uncritical presumption.

Thirdly, and normative issues aside, it is conceptually important to re-read charity as always-already made up of multiple proximities and familiarities, and multiply ethical projects and spaces, rather than linear engagements across distance and difference. This challenges assumptions that international development charity schemes like sponsorship necessarily equate to care 'at a distance' (e.g. Silk, 2004), and disrupts theoretical presumptions about care 'at a distance' which suggest that proximity is not needed in order for care to take place (e.g. Barnett and Land, 2007). Instead, it suggests that in real-world charitable encounters, engagements across distance are inevitably caught up with other more proximal engagements, to whatever extent the latter come to frame and shape the former. By extension, charitable action is made up of far more- spatially, relationally, ethically -than 'charity' as it is typically narrated.

6.4 Transforming/exiting the gift

Despite the propensity of sponsorship to 'hook' sponsors in and keep them committed, the gift relation is not immune from change or disturbance, and sometimes it fails or falls apart. I now explore how charity is *transformed*,

starting with instances where giving is expanded upon, and then instances where it falters or breaks down. I explore the extent to which such transformations line up with prevailing narratives about charity donation: is giving expanded upon when doing so flatters sponsor egos or invests in certain relational feedbacks? Conversely, does giving falter when it fails to 'serve' in some desired way, or to meet service delivery expectations? Throughout I show that, despite being a rarely considered segment of the giving process, 'transformation' is vitally important to understand, qualifying assumptions that charity necessarily always follows a particular life-cycle or intersects with the lives of donors in the same ways.

6.4.1 Expanding upon child sponsorship

Sponsorship can often become a commitment people seek to build on, whether to further support the IDNGO or because they love the device; this frequently means the sponsoring of more children. At Grassroots, where sponsorship starts at £3.50 per month, this is a relatively accessible increase which sponsors frequently anticipate. Many sponsor more children when they attend a Grassroots trip to one of its projects, especially if they meet a specific child they want to help:

"We [were sponsoring] three from the same family, then Suwaldi who is about 5 years old now. When she was first enrolled on the scheme, I met her mother...from that moment in time I offered to sponsor her, in Tanzania, having seen the need of the child and her mother." (Luke, Grassroots sponsor)

At Compassion, where sponsorship is £21 a month, sponsoring another child often represents a more serious commitment that demands considerable thought, even personal sacrifice. This does not stop sponsors, however; nor does it preclude decisions to sponsor more children being made 'in the moment', in response to a particular encounter. Compassion sponsor Natalie described how, since she started sponsoring, encounters with God, other people and Compassion child profiles have repeatedly prompted her to sponsor (readjusting her household budget each time), such that she now sponsors 16 children.

These examples re-iterate that sponsoring is not an equal act, demanding diverse types of commitment and decision-making from sponsors (also depending on their economic situation), and therefore diversifying the

types of meaning-making which underlay giving. They also show that sponsoring often exceeds the call of duty⁹⁹, with sponsors being prompted (often self-sacrificially) to increase their giving, frequently by some sort of emotive encounter¹⁰⁰. Encounter-based prompts to give can, therefore, inflect sponsor experiences long after giving has begun, and testify to the possibility of giving being expanded upon in response to more than simply internal feedbacks. This is conditional, however, on sponsors remaining open to being affected, rather than boundarising their existing giving as response enough. Such openness also allows existing commitments to be fine-tuned:

“I once sent...some Polos and some winegums, both of which I love. The message came back...they had never tasted mint before and didn't like it...and winegums contain gelatine which is made from pigs usually, so neither Moslems nor vegetarians could eat them. You live and learn!” (Elsie, Kindu sponsor)

Elsie shows that giving can be allowed to be a process of responsive learning, rather than reacting with offense that her generous, unobligated advances were not accepted. Here, cultural assumptions being exercised through the minutiae of sponsorship are not absorbed by the IDNGO or by recipients but deflected back to the sponsor. It represents a sadly rare example where recipients are not forced to perform gratitude and sponsors themselves become designated service delivery failures, needing to be taught rather than imparting knowledge.

In addition to sponsorship being transformed by being added to and developed, sponsors also transform their giving by engaging in other ways. They often, for instance, become impassioned to voluntarily spread the word about sponsorship, whether through formal promotional opportunities (e.g. in churches, schools), material and embodied display, or informal conversations:

“My sister sponsored a different one...and various colleagues at work and in the village around sponsor various ones...I've press-ganged several people into it! [laughter]” (Anne, Kindu sponsor)

⁹⁹ Another example of this is Compassion's 'Correspondence Sponsors' device, where sponsors commit to writing to children whose sponsors do not or cannot correspond. Gabby, a Compassion sponsor and advocate, now writes regularly to 20 children, many of who are not sponsored by her. This fragments the senses of agency and responsibility upon which sponsorship is built, and again testifies to sponsor movements far beyond the call of duty, to whatever extent such practices involve self-cultivation and gain.

¹⁰⁰ N.B. I did not come across any sense of competition either amongst Grassroots sponsors or amongst Compassion sponsors; such that decisions to sponsor more children become some kind of 'more-charitable-than-thou' contest.

This 'press-ganging' highlights that religious evangelism is not the only kind of evangelism visible in the everyday praxis of sponsorship. Vital to its charitable networks are other evangelistic figures, including enthusiastic sponsors (rarely are their activities recognised as 'evangelism' in its dogmatic sense, however). IDNGOs often depend significantly on these voluntary intermediaries and their performative 'repertoires' to mobilise and govern support (see also Barnett et al, 2005; Clarke et al, 2007). Several sponsors testified to being impacted by such individuals:

"There's a Compassion stand at church, and a Compassion lady who's fanatical about sponsorship, who tries to encourage everybody to sponsor more children than they can afford...that wasn't the reason I sponsored a child, but it kept the issue at the forefront of my mind." (Kat, Compassion sponsor)

Evangelistic efforts are not always directly, instantly successful, therefore, but often provide more subtle, regular encouragements (whether discursive, material or embodied), impacting mindsets and decisions diversely rather than conforming to a linear proselytic model.

The nature of these 'over-and-above' engagements, whether giving more money, time or energy, relies significantly on IDNGOs themselves. Compassion, for instance, has created an official 'advocacy' programme, managing volunteers through an assemblage of organisational resources, events and staff hierarchies. This not only spreads the word in a more purposeful way; it also serves strategically to close the felt gap between Compassion's bureaucratic facade and its desired reputation as a charity of the local church. By contrast, Kindu's less professionalised organisational culture affords sponsors more practical, less prescribed roles in shaping development projects (see 6.3.1). Both IDNGOs therefore blur the typical roles and relations assigned to 'donors' and 'staff' by neoliberal professionalism.

These blurrier contexts not only allow for the heightened involvement of individual sponsors, they also allow more room for critique and debate. Compassion advocates, for instance, do not simply become puppets of organisational discourse and strategy, but often experience a different side to Compassion during advocacy that prompts critique:

"Compassion seems to be plagued by administrative mistakes...I have repeatedly raised the issue of quality control not being as good as it should"

be...We and our projects should make every effort to deliver what we claim- in Jesus' name." (Simon, Compassion advocate)

Simon's reflections seemingly affirm neoliberal accounts of charity, since he uses his advocate position to reflexively impose extra layers of service delivery and accountability checks on the organisation (though this does not preclude his continued loyalty, as evidenced by his use of 'we' and 'our', identifying himself as part of Compassion). Contrastingly, during a time when Kindu was experiencing managerial difficulties, its active inclusion of sponsors moved beyond realms of service review to shaping organisational structure and direction:

"The major problem was Kate herself, actually. She couldn't focus on one issue and complicated matters by [taking on projects] which really were irrelevant to the main organisation, in fact were dangerous and were pointed out by me and others that it wasn't an appropriate thing to do. However since she's left...it's become more focused and more efficient again." (Matthew, Kindu sponsor)

Importantly, then, as sponsors become familiar with the IDNGO and with sponsorship, the result may not simply mean 'more' or 'better' giving in some romantically struggle-free way, but can be more abrasive. This may mean sponsor demands taking on a more bespoke form, conforming further to narratives of consumerism; or uncritically reproducing IDNGO discourses in ways which prevent critique. Additionally, however, this abrasiveness might potentially prompt debate and critical dialogue.

These accounts variously demonstrate giving being invested in and expanded upon in ways which spill beyond notions of obligation (whether social or religious), and frequently involve levels of other-regarding 'going beyond' and self-sacrifice that challenge self-oriented, egoistic narratives. Such transformations may be expected or planned, or may be the product of unanticipated, organic encounters. Their embrace by IDNGOs can muddy neoliberal conceptions of charity, challenging assumptions that 'donors' necessarily conform to service users and consumers, and 'staff' conform to expert service providers. Whether or not these blurrier lines of authority and expertise lead to critical reflection, recomposing charity of co-sustaining dynamics of criticality and loyalty, and what types of critique are privileged, depend not least on how IDNGOs allow for, manage and listen to such engagements.

6.4.2 Break-downs and disappointments: when sponsorship fails

Sponsorship is not always dialled up over time, however; often it settles into comfortable niches in sponsor lives (see 6.3). Whilst I did not come across anyone who had stopped sponsoring because they had grown tired of it (indeed, its 'personal' nature is such that most sponsors continue unless absolutely necessary), there is a sense of sponsor fatigue in this mundane 'settling' (usually meaning that intentions to write letters, send gifts or pray are not fulfilled), with any potential sense of 'relationship' or 'connection' lost or given up on. Arguably the propensity for this to happen is much greater where the sponsor-child connection does not feed some emotional need in the sponsor (although this apparent egoism is seldom separable from other-regarding concerns).

Additionally, instances also arise where sponsorship fails or breaks down. Many sponsors, for instance, acknowledge that the sponsor-child 'relationship' often falls short of the 'pen-pal' images projected in appeals:

"...the reality of it is different, you can't escape it, [your sponsored child] isn't someone you're going to build the world's strongest and greatest relationship with, so it's a bit odd in that sense, because you want it to be more than essentially it can really be. So I'd love to think it'd be great...but I will also understand if it doesn't turn out to be." (Tony, Compassion sponsor)

This response, echoing the 'cognitive dissonance' identified in chapter 5, shows the sense of disparity sponsors negotiate between what they desire from sponsorship and what they experience or realistically expect, accompanied by clear senses of disappointment. For Tony, in his first year of sponsoring, this is tempered by hope that things might improve. For others, sponsorship never reaches any relational zenith, breaking down irreparably:

"At university I sponsored a child through World Vision...when at one point the child I was sponsoring moved away from the project, they just sort of assigned me a new child, without asking me anything about it, kind of like, you're giving this money and it's not really about this child it's about a unit in this project. And yeah, I got kind of annoyed. I stopped sponsoring with them. I was in my very late teens and when you feel the financial stresses of being a student...I don't know, they didn't write to me and say 'would you like to sponsor another child? So-and-so has moved on and here's why', it was like 'right, that one's gone, here's a new one.'" (Caitlin, Grassroots sponsor)

What emerges for Caitlin is an emotionally charged sense of betrayal as the mechanics of World Vision's 'indirect' sponsorship scheme forcibly obliterate

her expectations of sponsorship, akin to Selinger-Morris's (2012) testimony that "*I was dumped by my sponsor child*" (though directing disappointment at the IDNGO more than the child). Importantly, however, Caitlin's cancellation cannot be read simply as disappointed consumer expectation. Other perceptions are present; not least wounded desires to contribute in a tangibly meaningful way and be valued as a giver, and feelings of disappointment regarding the less-than-personal underbelly of World Vision's sponsorship scheme. These instances of break-down and dissatisfaction therefore often own to gaps between sponsorship's promotion and its reality being revealed and experienced over time in unavoidably stark, difficult ways.

A different example of break-down comes from Plan sponsor Helen, who admitted not to feeling 'dumped' by her sponsored child or by Plan, but to independently giving up sponsorship due to her own financial difficulties. Her emotions are characterised predominantly by guilt:

"I did it for about 4 or 5 years? And then about 18 months ago I was sort of really struggling financially, and the direct debit bounced about two or three times on it, and I never [renewed it]...I'm sure he's got a better sponsor now!!...I did feel guilty. I think I blanked it out really...it's just the financial chaos my life is...I would do it again if I wasn't in debt! So just trying to keep a roof over my head and my daughter's head is priority." (Helen, former Plan sponsor)

Despite Plan's scheme being community-focused, such that Helen's cancellation does not mean the child's exclusion from the project, strong feelings of guilt nevertheless emerge here as different senses of personal responsibility clash. This is not, therefore, merely a case of absent care or some kind of care deficit. Rather, Helen cites strong senses of caring feeling and obligation, negotiating their apparent contradictions and incoherencies by 'blanking them out', rather than by reconciling them neatly. Her response raises important questions about how the sponsorship commitment is placed within an assumed care hierarchy (see Massey, 2004) with proximal, familial care at the top, and how senses of commitment which disrupt this hierarchy are negotiated, tamed and erased.

Finally, it is important to mention those for whom sponsorship ends in a more bittersweet way, successfully fulfilling its life-cycle. At this point, sponsors must bid farewell to children they may have sponsored for nearly 20 years:

“This is Celia from Ecuador [shows a photo] and she’s a very feisty girl, and she writes really feisty letters...I’ve got a load of encouragement from me encouraging her...and then I learned because she was turning 18 that you know, that she would be leaving the project, and I thought ‘I am gonna miss her! That’s gonna break my heart’...I still like to pray for her...so to me she’s still very much there.” (Lucy, Compassion sponsor)

In this instance, Lucy uses prayer to continue to practise the sponsor-child connection and sustain some sense of proximity. This not only highlights coping mechanisms which sponsors adopt to deal with the losses and disappointments of sponsorship, but also the intense attachments they can develop to sponsored children through the process. Weaving through these various narratives of charitable ‘exit’, ‘failure’ and ‘breakdown’, therefore, are surprising levels of commitment and passion.

Thus, whilst narratives of consumer expectation are reinforced by experiences of disappointment when sponsorship fails to deliver, or moves to trade in sponsorship for a ‘better’ model; nevertheless, within these circumstances dwell more complex responses. Several sponsors quoted here display humility and a willingness to revise their expectations, designating the sponsor experience one of personal struggle and challenge rather than consumer self-interest. Sponsorship can demand considerable sacrifice from sponsors (financially, emotionally), stimulating impressive levels of ‘going-beyond’ (Cloke, 2002) as well as deep feelings of betrayal, guilt, loyalty and love that transcend its ‘transaction’ nature. Furthermore, giving transformations often highlight the importance of *encounter* more than obligation (though this necessarily also figures), such that sponsor ethics are forged in praxis, and in relation, rather than issuing solely from pre-existing dispositions and conditioning frameworks.

Thus, inhering in the dynamism of the giving process are complex relations and modes of engagement, passionate commitments and strong bonds of loyalty, responsibility *to* as much as responsibility *for* Others. It is when sponsorship is transformed- added to, disrupted, or broken down -that the kinds of meaning it holds for sponsors are momentarily distilled with particular clarity, valorising this part of the giving process as empirically vital to accounts of charity.

6.5 Chapter conclusions

Through this chapter emerge some particular strands of thinking about both the geographies and the ethico-political possibilities of charity donation. Regarding its geographies, this work identifies three conceptual characteristics of charitable giving which existing literature has hitherto failed to recognise: its *multiplicity*, *embeddedness* and *dynamism*.

In terms of its *multiplicity*, moves to sponsor dialogically intertwine with many other caring impulses, obligations and relations, senses of selfhood, responsibility and collective belonging- sometimes in ways which embed charity and imbue it with further layers of meaning, and sometimes in ways which disrupt it. Charitable giving is also spatially multiple, co-producing bodies, homes, churches, schools and global charitable imaginaries, and relying on complex configurations of proximity and distance which exceed purely linear engagements of care 'at a distance'. Giving is re-defined as encompassing more complex modes of engagement than pity or desires for a 'warm glow' (though the latter remains a particularly salient narrative). Conversely, assuming that sponsorship is as individualistic and linear as it first appears may unnecessarily reinforce neoliberal allegations, covering over its more complex ethical flows.

As an *embedded* activity, charitable action emerges through specific, situated circumstances, being performed in ways which co-produce many overlapping spaces and landscapes, including those rarely acknowledged by academic work (e.g. the spiritual). Giving is therefore always understood and done in partial, situated ways which both frame the gift and dialogically, porously co-produce other spaces and social fabrics. Caring about and for distant others through the gift relation mingles with multiple additional concerns, desires and hopes, co-producing complex ethical configurations.

Finally, charitable action is *dynamic*, neither static nor uniform in space or time. Its character and content may manifest certain rhythms, and may change or break down. Stabilities and infrastructures of charity of course emerge, but fundamentally rely on myriad contingent relations and practices, intertwining in ways which often co-produce stability, but not always. This claim of dynamism might seem easier to level at sponsorship than other forms of

giving (e.g. one-off donations) because of its longer-term, dialogic nature. However, *all* giving decisions are infused with fluid negotiations, moral influences and thought-processes, and fluid traces of giving remain in donor bodies long after gifts have been given (e.g. as memories, lessons learned, imaginaries embedded, emotional sediment).

Following on from this, and as regards the ethico-political dynamics of charity, recognising the messiness of donation allows for the partial truth of narratives regarding colonial patronage, neoliberal citizenship, egoistic 'moral selving' and uncritical 'do-gooderism' to be acknowledged, but also allows for ways in which charity moves beyond these. For instance, the in-built dynamism of charity suggests that it is not only a phenomenon which *re-embeds* certain imaginaries and power relations, but also one which always already carries the potential for their disruption. The situated, multiply ethical nature of charity highlights its configuration through complex caring dynamics including unrequited generosity, virtue, and affective promptings which cannot be vocalised. Child sponsorship is often done for far more complex reasons and in more complex ways than out of white or middle class guilt, or because it's 'the done thing' in particular social circles, or because it forms part of attempts to become a certain type of person.

In view of these complexities, I would like to suggest a new way of thinking about the ethics of giving and giving performances. Emergent through this chapter is a distinction between charitable responses uncritically informed by particular dispositions, to whatever extent this is cognitive; and responses which display critical tendencies. Dispositional responses mobilise already-existing ethico-spatial narratives and imaginaries, often assuming them to be broader, shared stances, leaving them unquestioned as the commonsense 'order of things'. These might be faith-based, with 'charity' becoming apolitically valorised as a faith-full response or normatively judged according to taken-for-granted religious parameters of success (e.g. conversion). It might involve the uncritical deployment of assumptions about Western agency, advancement and conceptions of childhood/adulthood. It might also involve neoliberal conditionings, with sponsorship being routed through tropes of personal responsibility, 'global citizenship' and consumer choice, and judged according to neoliberal value sets (e.g. accountability, transparency, efficiency).

However these dispositions form, they configure charitable responses by reading the world, giving and the gift relationship through pre-given parameters, precluding alternative modes of engagement. And yet, this research also identifies the need for a more complex, fluid picture of givers. I have pointed throughout to instances where sponsors are more critical, whether of IDNGO practices, giving devices or charitable imaginaries; infusing sponsorship praxis with negotiation, confusion and critical self-reflection. Such critiques might form a post-evangelical response to taken-for-granted faith frameworks¹⁰¹, leading sponsors to re-think what they want their giving to achieve and perhaps relinquish or revise their own expectations. Such critiques often also involve postcolonial reactions against the propensity of charity to encourage patronising attitudes from donors. Sponsors might feel uncomfortable with the expectations they perceive sponsorship imposes on children, or with choosing a sponsored child as if choosing a ‘dog from a litter’, worrying about the power imbalances such practices incur. They might also involve post-neoliberal and anti-egoistic reflections on tropes of personal responsibility and consumer choice, refuting imaginaries of charity which flatter sponsor egos by emphasising their saving agency and expertise, and seeking to distance the self from conditional impositions of consumer choice and expectations of return (e.g. letters, emotional satisfaction, demonstrable evidence of success, etc).

Many such moments of critique are triggered through praxis, or by a particular encounter or event, filtering charity through new experiential registers and opening up new ethical and political possibilities. This might involve meeting a staff member, corresponding with a sponsored child or visiting a development project in person; through encountering God, or through seemingly more mundane engagements with family and friends. Indeed, the initial prompting of charity, moving donors from inaction to action, is prevaillingly triggered by such encounters. This may, of course, embed the dispositional thinking described above, but might also prompt moments of critical reflection and debate. Instead of sponsorship being a taken-for-granted response to certain moral/spatial codes that is uncritically presumed upon to unfold in certain ways, it becomes the object of critical struggle. These critical disruptions

¹⁰¹ I take ‘post-evangelical’ to mean a sense of critical reflection on ‘fundamentalist’ styles of evangelical Christian thought and action, which may well lead to a re-moulding of evangelistic praxis rather than a full abandonment of all styles of evangelistic thought, feeling and action.

draw into the frame postmodern readings of ethics (and their shared heritage with postcolonial and postsecular thinking, see 5.8), which emphasise attitudes of attentiveness, responsiveness, openness and self-vulnerability (see 3.2.5). Thus, the most normatively promising charitable engagements seem to be predicated on a more expansive view of what it means to be charitable, moving beyond the giving of money, time and energy to include a generosity of self founded on a sense of openness to the other and willingness to 'go beyond'.

The most promising spaces for such engagements, it would seem, involve communal spaces where such encounters and dialogue are more likely to be commonplace¹⁰², rather than sponsorship remaining a predominantly private, individualistic practice. Also promising are IDNGOs which make room for such possibilities to speak back to their structures and discourses, encouraging open debate, facing up to the gaps, tensions and inconsistencies imbuing sponsorship and making space for more expansive, creative engagements. Clearly, in the sense that such attitudes necessarily disrupt neoliberal roles assigned to 'staff' and 'donors', such outside-the-box engagements should be invested in critically, lest they end up further flattering notions of active global citizenship whilst reproducing age-old condescension, with little change to how recipients are conceptualised and included. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities here to invest in collective senses of purposeful action for good which are founded on attitudes of openness, humility, and willingness to be changed. Whilst sponsorship may not, on the whole, currently foster such 'lines of flight' in much more than embryonic or accidental form, its propensity to entice the long-term commitment of sponsors, in an engagement founded on notions of dialogue and self-sharing, would seem too good an opportunity to waste in this regard, and many of the sponsor experiences included in this chapter testify to this.

¹⁰² Though of course, these might equally encourage the uncritical circulation of particular discourses and tropes.

Chapter 7: Re-mapping charitable space

7.1 Introduction

Critiquing the common everyday narratives and academic assumptions identified in chapters 2 and 3, chapters 5 and 6 begin the project of complicating existing thinking about charity, focusing on two key sites in the charity process: the organisation and the donor. Following on from this, in this chapter I take a somewhat more expansive view, asking how entities like IDNGOs and child sponsors fold together via myriad objects, spaces, people, discourses, emotions and affects, in ways which produce charitable space. In other words, having spent considerable time destabilising simplistic narratives about charity, I now want to suggest more constructively how charitable space, and the complex processes caught up within it, might be re-conceptualised.

To achieve this I mobilise various strands of relational thinking, building my argument through the four case study IDNGOs and sponsor groups used in chapter 6. The goal here is not to present a comprehensive, organised theory which can be applied henceforth to any study of charity, but to open up different questions about charitable space and suggest different styles of thought towards it, which might (or might not) be useful. The goal is to become and remain open to thinking about the possibilities of charity in new ways. I begin by appraising some useful theoretical strands, traditions and resources for this task, and then move forward case study by case study, building up a more complex picture of charitable space. Finally, I draw my argument together through some discussion, suggesting some important implications for geographical thinking about charity.

7.1.1 Rethinking charitable space relationally

It has been suggested previously (see 2.6), and is my contention in this chapter, that geographical approaches to charity would benefit considerably from being thought relationally. As such, I begin here by situating what follows within broader theoretical shifts towards relationality, then identifying more specific resources which I will draw on through the chapter. Numerous attempts exist to catalogue the various tendrils of relational thinking within human geography; all are partial and this one is no different.

Re-thinking the world in terms of relations has a long history, emergent from post-structural attempts to disturb modernist accounts of society and the subject, flee unhelpful dualisms (e.g. nature/society, local/global, agency/structure) and move away from Euclidean understandings of space. Through the 1990s 'relational turn', relationality became geography's paradigmatic framework, thanks particularly to the work of Doreen Massey (e.g. 1991; 2005) and Nigel Thrift (e.g. 1996). Jones (2009: 491) summarises its key concerns:

“Relational thinking is a paradigmatic departure from the concerns of absolute and relative space, because it dissolves the boundaries between objects and space, and rejects forms of spatial totality. Space does not exist as an entity in and of itself...objects are space, space is objects, and moreover objects can be understood only in relation to other objects – with all this being a perpetual becoming of heterogeneous networks and events that connect internal spatiotemporal relations”.

This mention of 'perpetual becoming' gestures towards another important geographical 'turn' with which this work intertwines: that towards practice and the performative 'doing' of space (e.g. Gregson and Rose, 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Conradson, 2003). Relational geographical approaches specifically centralise the practices and processes by which space becomes configured, transformed and broken down.

Across these broader shifts can be distilled some particularly important lines of thought, including a concern for re-theorising seemingly stable, singular entities (including concepts like space, scale and time as well as entities like humans and organisations) as comprised of multitudes of heterogeneous social and material relations. As above, they also involve concerns for the processes, practices and performativities through which these relations are drawn together, the ordering processes which tame and erase instability and complexity, and the porosity and provisionality of all phenomena. Such concerns provide base points from which to depart in this chapter, and immediately bolster the critical disruptions which this thesis has made so far: we can expect child sponsorship, sponsors, IDNGOs, gifts and giving practices to be porous (not bounded), multiple (not singular or linear), provisional (not pre-given) and composed of diverse, heterogeneous parts.

Emergent through and building on these broader emphases are several strands of academic thought which provide some useful concepts for this study of charitable space (see also 2.6). Crudely separated and roughly delineated, the first of these strands is actor-network theory (ANT), which mobilises the concept of the network to explore the emergence of phenomena through provisional configurations of the social and material (see Thrift, 1996; Murdoch, 1998; Latour, 2005), towards which it remains purposefully open and unassuming. ANT styles of enquiry have been criticised for (not least) dealing inadequately with network heterogeneity, and for being over-reliant on the 'network' metaphor (e.g. Lee and Brown, 1994; Hetherington and Law, 2000). This has provided productive ground for an 'after-ANT' literature, seeking to configure more complex conceptual approaches (this derives particular inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari (e.g. 1987)). Nevertheless, ANT's concern for the relational configuration of organised entities remains central to relational thinking, awarding its conceptual resources enduring salience (Bosco, 2006).

ANT joins an array of other theoretical tools grouped under the banner of 'non-representational theories' (NRT). These start from the point that "*thought is placed in action and action is placed in the world*" (Anderson and Harrison, 2010: 11) and therefore seek more practice-based, bodily ways of grasping how subjects, objects and space are brought into being. This body of work includes pioneering geographical work on affect and performativity (e.g. Thrift, 2000; Dewsbury, 2000), foregrounding ways of attending to the experiential, embodied characteristics of space which helpfully supplement the concerns of ANT (Anderson et al, 2012). Most recently, NRT has come to encompass thinking related to 'assemblage', a set of conceptual and theoretical moves also indebted to Deleuze and Guattari (e.g. Anderson and McFarlane, 2011b; *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2012). Assemblage thinking seeks a less spatially constricted, more provocative way of approaching the processual ways in which entities emerge, hold together and change, emphasising *formation* rather than resultant form (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011a; see also Anderson et al, 2012). Importantly, it foregrounds interplays between order and disruption (McFarlane and Anderson, 2011), emphasising that coherence and stability never fully erase heterogeneity (indeed, they may even depend upon it). Of

particular relevance to this study, assemblage thinking has been mobilised to undergird more nuanced accounts of citizenship and volunteering praxis which disturb simplistic allegations relating to both the neoliberal and the colonial (e.g. Lorimer, 2010). Whilst I will broadly be casting my discussion in 'network' terms, I intend to make use of the attentiveness of assemblage thinking to network heterogeneity, and to the dialogues between form and formation, as part of appraising similar themes and allegations regarding child sponsorship.

Whilst these bodies of work are in many ways divergent, therefore, they each provide helpful emphases for this chapter. I cannot claim to be the first to apply such thinking to charity, however, since relational concerns are traceable across many related literatures. For instance, IDNGOs are positioned as 'open systems' able to both influence and be influenced by their environments (Fowler, 1997; Lewis, 2003), as peopled by people rather than being singular, even entities (e.g. Hilhorst, 2003), and as porously interrelating with other development bodies in different types of partnership and coalition (e.g. Henry et al, 2004; Yanacopulous, 2005). Similarly, within geographical work on voluntarism, studies have turned to emphasising the internal diversity and dynamism of Third Sector organisations (e.g. Gregson et al, 2002; Berry and Gabay, 2009; Yarwood, 2011), and explore the formation and (de)stabilisation of such organisational spaces as charity shops (Gregson et al, 2002; Parsons, 2006; Goodman and Bryant, 2009), homeless shelters and drop-in centres (e.g. Conradson, 2003a; 2003b; Evans, 2010; Darling, 2011), directing attention to how networks of voluntary welfare provision take shifting, heterogeneous form through the enrolment of individual people and the circulation and consumption of particular ethical discourses (e.g. Cloke et al, 2005; 2007).

To apply such styles of thought to the spaces of child sponsorship, and to explore how networks of charitable activity emerge (rather than focusing only on IDNGOs, or only on sponsors), I compose the subsequent discussion around three overlapping theoretical moves, each applied to the four case study IDNGOs/sponsor groups used in chapter 6. Firstly, I argue that charitable space can be re-conceptualised as made up of different kinds of network, each constructed from heterogeneous arrays of the social, material, emotional, etc. This builds on insights from previous chapters that IDNGOs are situated, porous entities, and that sponsors are situated within ethical networks of the everyday.

It is again important to note that my deployment of the term 'network' here is broadly descriptive, allowing for a more open-ended theoretical focus than could be achieved through a coherent fidelity to ANT.

Secondly, I argue that charitable space is co-produced through various *networking* processes; being ordered, stabilised and *done* through different technologies, performative tactics, encounters and habitual practices (see also Milligan, 2007). This means attending to the processual dynamics of its (de)composition and (dis)ordering, and the various registers of its 'experiential textures' (Conradson, 2003a). Lastly, I argue that charitable space is composed of diverse networked relations. This may seem a particularly obvious point to labour; however, I raise it again here in order to avoid an approach which simplistically notes the existence of relations and traces endless connections. Instead, I seek to explore more thoughtfully the *content* and *nature* of these immensely pluralistic, complex configurations, and ask how they work out in practice (see also Allen, 2011).

The remainder of this chapter uses these three strands of argument to attend more deeply to the complex spatialities of charity, examining how charitable networks become composed, ordered and made stable, and their inevitable incoherencies, fluidities and porosities. I remain open to these networks potentially involving parts, flows and dynamics which have not before been associated with charity, and to witnessing to the provisionality of charitable space. In so doing, I intend to recast geographical perspectives on its central roles and relations, as well as perspectives on the potential charitable space might have to foster alternative ethical and political lines of flight.

7.2 Grassroots

To squeeze Grassroots into generally recognisable conceptual parameters, it appears a small, evangelical Christian IDNGO with a 2011-2012 income of just over £466,000, four 'direct benefit' child sponsorship projects and just under 1100 sponsors; voluntarily run by its founders, spousal team Hugo and Sharon Anson, and a number of other friends¹⁰³. Grassroots remains

¹⁰³ Unless otherwise stated, information is derived from interview with Hugo and Sharon Anson,

particularly 'grassroots', lacking a professionalised staff and being managed from people's homes. During my interview with the Ansons in their family home, their three children arrived back from school and suddenly the place was in uproar, school bags clattering, energetic chit-chat, un-tucked shirts, stomping feet and shared sofas. I felt about as far as I could possibly get from the professionalised offices of ActionAid and the corporatised patter of Plan. If we are to talk about the 'experiential textures' (Conradson, 2003a) of charitable space, however, then such things- which might otherwise slip through the net of academic theorising –become important. Thus, the following account of Grassroots' networks, networking processes and relations, affords such details formative space.

7.2.1 'We don't have joined-up dots': Grassroots' networks

I begin with several partial stories about Grassroots' development. It is a strange, atypical agglomeration which began to condense in 1996 out of several formative processes centred on the activities of the Ansons, who remain its directors, managers and administrators. Hugo and Sharon have been involved in Christian mission activities since the early 1980s, endowing them with particular capabilities by cultivating their own senses of missional being and building up an array of friendships and contacts, many of who eventually helped Grassroots into organised being. Thus, Grassroots' establishment owes much to relations and processes which precede its formal ordering.

Grassroots' 'origins' can also be traced to several nascent Christian charitable projects, in Britain and elsewhere, which were also developing independently during the 1990s. In diverse ways these projects came to be known to the Ansons, who sought to set up an organisational umbrella to support them. For some projects, this support is about legal and managerial oversight, with an eventual aim of becoming independent; whilst others have chosen to remain within Grassroots' framework. Thus, the Ansons describe Grassroots not so much as a charity as a 'hub', with fluid, leaky boundaries that shift as projects mature, some moving on and new ones being drawn in. It has a particularly processual, assembling feel to it, drawing together an eclectic mix of projects which retain their heterogeneity rather than being subsumed into a

singular 'Grassroots' entity. These include child sponsorship programmes in Tanzania, Kenya, India and Romania (each supporting a pre-existing indigenous welfare project), Christian outreach in British schools and to club workers in Tenerife, and UK projects providing free cooked meals during school holidays for children from low-income families. Grassroots' focus is therefore far broader than 'development', leaking out of the seemingly ill-fitting designation 'IDNGO'.

Grassroots owes its post-1996 establishment (particularly its acquisition of child sponsors) less to eye-catching literature and campaigns, and more to informal networks cultivated by staff and volunteers in spaces such as churches, schools and mission events. These performances have established a highly loyal support base, where senior staff become personally known and trusted by supporters (see chapter 6). They interweave with bi-annual trips run by Grassroots to its Tanzania project (its biggest sponsorship scheme), whereby [potential] supporters join staff for two weeks to "*visit the projects, meet the team, minister in the churches and interview the children*"¹⁰⁴. These trips are self-funded and open to anyone, regardless of religious affiliation or supporter status¹⁰⁵. Those who attend, according to the Ansons, often return to become support-raising 'hotspots', evangelising their own social networks about Grassroots' causes. Thus, various informal networks of support also fibrously extend from Grassroots' official boundaries, feeding back into its network as strengthening, stabilising flows of money, prayer and friendship.

From its origins, therefore, Grassroots' networks do not condense easily into a singular, stable entity, but constantly shift and change shape, held together by the evangelical and managerial efforts of the Ansons (somewhat akin to ANT's 'immutable mobiles'). In the words of Sharon Anson, "*we don't have joined-up dots*". Coursing through these provisional configurations, and the various peoples and spaces they draw into play, are not just 'social' forms and connections, but also a wealth of materials without which Grassroots simply would not exist: computers, aeroplanes, paper letters, website software, "*that horrendous coach journey*" from Dar es Salaam to Mbeya¹⁰⁶, Bibles,

¹⁰⁴ <http://grassroots.org.uk/home/projects/mbeya-tanzania>, accessed 09/07/13.

¹⁰⁵ Trip applications can also be made via the website, meaning that they are accessible to more people than just the personal contacts of staff.

¹⁰⁶ Luke, Grassroots sponsor.

promotional discourses, flows of money, emotion, affect and the spiritual (discussed subsequently). In what follows, I show that these intricate details of Grassroots' 'charitable space' are illuminating regarding the kinds of charitable action, feeling and relation it fosters.

7.2.2 Networking processes

I now discuss five interrelated types of networking process central to the performative ordering of Grassroots' networks: charisma, friendship, proximal encounter, evangelism and attentiveness to the prophetic. These are not exhaustive, but they are important. Firstly, charisma. Whether fundraising work or myriad other organisation-building tasks (administrating, managing, training, etc), the charismatic personas of the Ansons have been central to Grassroots' development. Whether present in first encounters with potential donors, or in decade-long friendships, this charisma forms a visible source of inspiration and trust for supporters:

“Sharon and Hugo, when I first met them, they worked with me and a couple of others on a big camp on the Isle of Wight...in 1987. [They] came over as evangelists to work with us...and I learned an awful lot from them...so to be associated with Sharon and Hugo and the work they've been doing over the years has been fantastic” (Luke, Grassroots sponsor)

Here, Luke expresses a clear desire to 'be associated' with the Ansons, to feel part of the crowd they lead; literatures on organisational management have long recognised the importance of such inspiration to organisational establishment and success (e.g. Conger, 1989; Rowden, 2000; see also 6.2.1). For Grassroots sponsors, therefore, commitments to sponsor a child are often, at least in part, commitments to support- and be associated with -such individuals. This interrelates with a second, related networking process: the creation and cultivation of personal friendships between staff and supporters, which prompt loyalty and avid interest from sponsors (see also 6.2.1). Informal friendship-based networking efforts are valorised academically as vitally binding together formal networks of all kinds (e.g. Milligan, 2007; Bosco, 2007; Smith et al, 2010). For Grassroots, clearly not all friendships are of the same nature or depth; however, one of the keys to Sharon's and Hugo's appeal is their ability to make everyone feel like friends, no matter the extent of their involvement. The anecdote at the beginning of this section, for instance, demonstrates how

informally and caringly I was welcomed into their home (it was also the only interview where I was offered a hug at the end!!).

Thirdly, Grassroots' networks are cultivated through an emphasis on proximal encounter, whereby supportive responses are prompted by supporters' own senses of first-hand experience and eye-witness, as distinct from the seemingly shallower, mediated access afforded through official organisational discourse (e.g. promotional literature). Face-to-face encounters and physical co-presence afford sponsors an embodied sense of 'being-there', whether this issues from meeting Sharon and Hugo, who seemingly embody the 'real' work of Grassroots, or from attending a Grassroots trip to Tanzania, organised around measuring the progress of sponsored children. Trip-goers enjoy quasi-staff status for two weeks, becoming the administrative faces of Grassroots to recipients and performing the organisational infrastructures of sponsorship. During, they often experience a change of perspective:

"...when you've spent a week actually working with someone, you've kind of learned a little bit more about them...you can say 'I'm not doing this because I want to help a poor person, I'm doing this because I've met this person and I know a bit more about them...Before I went [to Tanzania] I thought sponsorship kind of ticks all the boxes...but [now] I'm quite happy for someone else who knows a little bit more about it to spend the money however they think it needs to be spent." (Johnny, Grassroots sponsor)

This can affect giving practices; for instance, trip members who go with the intention of meeting their sponsored child often change their mind once there and remain anonymous, acting from a more expansive sense of the collective meaning of the project rather than from an individualistic sense of personal connection to one child, which suddenly seems arbitrary¹⁰⁷. Thus, the proximal encounters afforded by the trips can transform the nature of gift relations, whilst vitally supplementing Grassroots' managerial work.

In these examples, key parts of the sponsorship network (sponsors, staff, recipients) are brought into dialogue in more intensive, visceral ways than through the obvious mediations of promotions. Rather than being wedded to stereotypical charitable architectures of scale and distance, where giving action is positioned as a local response to a global/international cause (thus requiring giving responses to be scaled up via generalised moral imaginaries), charity is

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Hugo and Sharon Anson.

engaged with via experiences of specific people and places. This permits kinds of encounter and sense-making which exceed those fostered by charity promotions, here functioning to make Grassroots legitimate, accessible and attractively personable to donors. This does not constitute a reification of Cartesian proximity over distance (indeed, such encounters as detailed above need not necessarily rely on physical co-presence), but rather recognises the importance of dispositional and experiential registers not usually associated with charitable space (see also Harrison, 2000 Thrift, 2004), in these instances emergent through physical proximity.

This affordance of proximal encounter also forms a deliberate purpose for the trips, with staff hoping that they will inspire trip members to sponsor children, and proceed to evangelise their own social networks upon returning home:

“[The trip] really brought home to me the benefit that the scheme is bringing to those children, and obviously when you see that, [you get] a desire to want to promote it and get more people sponsoring” (Luke, Grassroots sponsor)

This overlaps with a fourth networking process which extends, orders and strengthens Grassroots’ networks: person-to-person *evangelism* (see also Cloke et al, 2010). Being an evangelical Christian organisation, this involves *religious* evangelism as much as evangelism about Grassroots projects. Grassroots’ Christian evangelism is multi-directional: trip members join in with Grassroots’ ‘ministry’ in the Mbeya community in Tanzania, but are also themselves subject to working within the project’s Christian parameters, and alongside its Christian leadership. Thus, the trips also become an evangelistic tool (though not necessarily obviously so) aimed at changing the perspectives of trip members, not all of whom share Grassroots’ faith:

“There were some times in church when I sort of went ‘ugh, this is over my head now’, but church was fun, church was people singing and dancing, and I thought ‘well, if church was like that I might go!’...I did come out and say to Sharon ‘I may not be a Christian, but I do understand the inclination. You don’t need to be a Christian, you just need to have a good heart.’” (Delia, Grassroots trip member)

According to Hugo and Sharon, Grassroots’ evangelical stance has evolved over the years to include an unconditional welcome and practical emphasis on serving, as well as sharing the Gospel message verbally, reflecting broader

eschatological shifts in evangelical Christian thought and praxis away from traditional verbal proselytism (Cloke et al, 2012). Their stance with child sponsorship now involves clearly stating to recipient communities that no child will be discriminated against if they do not adhere to Christianity:

“I love it when Sharon gets up in front of people [in Tanzania]...and says ‘we’re here because we love Jesus, and we want you to know the love of Jesus. But if you’re a Muslim, or if you’re pagan, or if you’ve got no belief at all, we’re here for you just as much’...Whether [they’re] Muslim or Christian doesn’t really matter at the end of the day, does it; they’re people, and they need the help just the same.” (Luke, Grassroots sponsor)

The same applies to trip members and other sponsors: take or leave Grassroots Christianity; you will always be welcome. Thus, whilst Delia (above) would appear to be rendered other because of her lack of faith, she is simultaneously welcomed as self because of her positions as sponsor/gift-giver, supporter, friend and trip-goer. Such details reveal several things about Grassroots’ networking processes. Firstly, they are often fundamentally configured and sustained by passionate desires for particular relational outcomes (in this case, for the self: deeper fidelity to God; and for the other: conversion), but, secondly, that these desires can be both fluidly provisional (e.g. the Ansons’ in-process stance on evangelism) and tempered by other ethical concerns (for Luke, regarding inclusion and exclusion), infusing multiple interrelating concerns, balances and negotiations into single relations and encounters.

These negotiating, balancing processes are guided, undoubtedly, by particular doctrinal stances, denominational influences and deep senses of belief and moral principle; all of which are provisional but nevertheless function as network strengtheners and stabilisers. At Grassroots, these are unfailingly conjoined with a belief in God’s active presence and involvement, and a desire to discern and follow His leading, which forms my fifth and final networking process: attentiveness to the prophetic and to spiritual discernment (see also chapter 1; Cloke, 2011; Cloke et al, 2012). To talk of God becoming wrapped up in this may seem airy-fairy, but to the Ansons and other Grassroots staff and supporters, it reflects both the soul and the backbone of the entire effort. The soul: because an ethos of seeking and listening to God suffuses everyday organisational existence. For instance, Sharon Anson offered two anecdotes of supporters telephoning to say they had discerned through prayer that their

sponsored child was in trouble. When staff responded immediately by launching an investigation in Tanzania (showing an organisational commitment to believing in the power of prayer), they came upon life-or-death scenarios that otherwise would have been discovered too late. Thus, staff members take seriously the call to remain open to spiritual forms of knowledge and insight, and supporters faithfully integrate this into their supporting activities. There is a paradoxical strength derived here from belief in the always-beyond and openness to being redirected, which defies reduction to easy managerial boxes.

The backbone: because this ethos of faith in God's active involvement shapes organisational decisions about staffing, strategy and direction. The Ansons told of how the Tanzania child sponsorship project (now supporting over 2250 children¹⁰⁸) began through miraculous promptings and took shape through prayer and attention to Scripture. Grassroots includes or excludes new projects based on prayerful attentiveness to God's leading: "*you know, you can just sense when it's a God thing and when it's not!*"¹⁰⁹. Hugo and Sharon work almost full time for Grassroots, yet take no income from it, instead having faith for provision to come in other ways (and indeed, other people have committed to support them as a family, to provide them with a house, etc). This seems quite a precarious existence, demanding faith rather than forward-planning and showing a fidelity to spiritual, rather than social or material, forms of stability. These various processes show how the purposeful, attentive enfolding of spiritual landscapes into charitable space provides both a source of stability and territorialisation for Grassroots, and a potential source of de-territorialisation and negotiation, with the one very often being interdependently entwined with the other.

In summary, the experiential textures of Grassroots' charitable space are configured by a wealth of different networking processes, including the Ansons' creative efforts, an emphasis on informal, proximal encounters, various types of evangelism and active engagements with God. Moving through these are commitments to particular styles and ethos of networking, including charisma, friendship and radical brands of faithful living. Whether surfacing in policy-making or everyday encounters, these processual qualities order and stabilise

¹⁰⁸ <http://grassroots.org.uk/home/projects/mbeya-tanzania>, accessed 09/07/13.

¹⁰⁹ Sharon Anson.

charitable space (and sometimes destabilise it too). I now turn to how, through them, particular ways of relating come to the fore.

7.2.3 Networked relations

It is clear that the networking processes suffusing Grassroots foster informal relations predicated on such diverse qualities as open welcome, inspired friendship and spiritual obedience. I would briefly like to unpack the specific implications of such qualities for staff-donor relations. Whether through ad hoc encounters with staff which blossom into personal friendships, or through the trips which elevate team members to staff-like positions, the creative types of engagement emergent here blur neoliberal designations of 'staff' and 'donor'. This stretches to donors being able to contribute their own expertise to Grassroots; sponsor Luke, for instance, regularly attends the Tanzania trips and puts his penchant for photography to work whilst there, photographing sponsored children for organisational records. Similarly, already-existing personal connections are often utilised by staff for important organisational tasks: the accounts, software development and trusteeship are all done by drawing on the expertise of friend-supporters. Whilst more professionalised IDNGOs may draw on personal connections in their recruitment processes, Grassroots' organic development is particularly suffused with informal modes of relation, leaky architectures of expertise and circumvention of neoliberal staffing procedures.

In the process, 'donors' are taken seriously as the lifeblood of the organisation, in more ways than just financial provision, and network heterogeneity is welcomed rather than subsumed into narrow neoliberal divisions of 'donors' and 'staff'. This often works to demote traditional relational forms and processes associated with child sponsorship: sponsors become so inspired by their involvements with staff that traditional elements of sponsorship (e.g. letter-writing, gift-sending) are forgotten or passed over; or they remain anonymous to their sponsored child, changing the spirit of the entire charity process. Thus, and importantly, these networked relations have a bearing on the gift relation, shaping the central ethical tenets of charitable space.

7.2.4 Concluding thoughts: repositioning charitable tent-pegs

Directing attention to the nitty-gritty relational dynamics and ordering processes which imbue Grassroots may be interesting, but what does it have to say about Grassroots as 'charitable space'? Whilst the underlying drive of Grassroots- to raise funds for projects aimed at improving welfare (social, spiritual) -is comparable to most other IDNGOs and demands certain relational configurations in order to succeed (e.g. fundraising mechanisms, voluntary movements to give and care, designations of need, leadership, legal frameworks), the way this unfolds within Grassroots is shaped strongly by its particular networked characteristics. When sponsors are welcomed unconditionally as friends, their specific skill sets recognised and welcomed, neoliberal narratives of charity are superseded by blurrier, organic relational movements. When deserving projects are discovered or particular issues raised, staff not only engage with particular types of logic, professional expertise and moral principle, but also with notions of the prophetic; deriving belief-full stability from the excessive immutability of God, negotiated through faith. And when sponsors become more enamoured with Hugo and Sharon Anson than they are with sponsored children, designations of 'need' become configured less around an impoverished other deserving of help, and more around a worthier version of the self deserving of support:

"Day to day, you know, I work for a bank, I've worked for a bank for over 35 years, and I go to a Methodist church which is, you know, most of the time is totally boring, so it's quite nice to have connections with people who live Christian life on the edge a bit more...it's quite nice to be associated with them and the work they're doing." (Luke, Grassroots sponsor)

In sum, Grassroots' charitable space far exceeds narratives of the neoliberal and the colonial, forming a charitable assemblage which does not seem to fit into any preconceived analytical box, with ethical lines of flight issuing from an acknowledged openness and unconditional welcome, and senses of selfhood and otherness which are fragmented and located multiply across its network. As such, a relational approach opens up space for revelations about Grassroots' 'charity' and 'Christianity' which defy traditional assumptions about these descriptors and retain an ethical openness to their dynamic, complex potentialities.

7.3 The Kindu Trust

Like Grassroots, the Kindu Trust is a small IDNGO¹¹⁰ which emerged in the mid-late 1990s, becoming established through low-cost, word-of-mouth networks, and developing its own form of 'direct benefit' child sponsorship (bucking broader trends in development praxis towards communal schemes). In what follows, I note both points of commonality between the two organisations and points of divergence, presenting several narratives about the Kindu Trust's formation, stabilisation, de-stabilisation and re-stabilisation since its inception, and examining the processes and relations which co-constitute this. I then reflect critically on the kinds of charitable action these dynamics foster.

7.3.1 Doctors, tourists and comparison sites: Kindu's diverse networks

Whilst the Kindu Trust's emergence and establishment has already been mentioned elsewhere (see 5.6.4; 6.2.1), I would like here to tell four specific stories to more fully, multiply grasp this. Firstly, Kindu evolved from circumstances surrounding its founder, British woman Kate Eshete (nee Fereday), who travelled to Ethiopia in 1994 in the wake of a BBC report on Ethiopian street children, and desiring to make something more of her own life.

"For the first eight years, I made visits to Ethiopia that lasted from one week to three months. In 2002 I emigrated to Ethiopia...In Plymouth I had been employed by a telecommunications company where I was one of hundreds of workers. It was difficult to feel that my work there was important. In Ethiopia I helped people and in some cases I actually saved lives, so it seemed very important and a much more worthwhile way to spend my life..."

I felt the need to set up a charity to help needy children in Ethiopia in a sustainable and effective way. On returning to Plymouth, I persuaded a number of friends to join me as trustees to register the Kindu Trust with the Charity Commission." (Kate Fereday Eshete, Kindu Trust founder)

The Kindu Trust was therefore founded not only on encounters within Ethiopia, but also on flows of Western privilege and modern drudgery, particular media discourses about 'Africa' and 'Ethiopia', and moral drives to make one's own life count. Whilst Kindu is built significantly on Kate's attempt to divorce herself from Western contexts, these have remained vital to its development, with friends and family in Plymouth helping the Trust to take practical form and providing an initial support base.

¹¹⁰ At £93,000 per annum (March 2013 figure; Charities Commission) and 220 sponsors (February 2012 figure; Director of Operations), Kindu is considerably smaller than Grassroots.

Layering onto this is a second story, involving a series of encounters in 1998 out of which the Trust's formal structure and sponsorship scheme precipitated. A group of health professionals from Leicester, UK, whilst seeking to forge professional links in Gondar, encountered some abandoned children on the ward of Gondar hospital and recruited Kate to re-house them:

“Basically for various reasons there were about 12 orphaned children on the ward...the doctors and nurses were too kind to chuck them out and give them nowhere to go, but on the other hand it wasn't a very suitable environment for them. We were supposed to do particular training but this seemed quite a serious issue...so we started looking around to see if we could find anyone to look after them.” (Anne, Leicester-based doctor and Kindu sponsor)

The group members each agreed to 'sponsor' one or two of the children, initiating what subsequently developed into the Trust's current sponsorship model:

“So right from the start, all of these children, all of us in Leicester, we sponsored one each...I first knew them in 1997, so it was two years later we managed to get them re-housed so that would be '99, so that would be 13 years...They've all had an education...[My sponsored child], he's finished school, he's trained as a nurse, and now he's a nurse in a clinic in Gondar!” (Anne, see above)

This example demonstrates the co-constitutive emergence of Kindu's formal structures and a key group of supporters, through networks which far exceed organisational boundaries. Thus, Kindu's sponsorship scheme is not an off-the-peg fundraising device, but developed through a specific set of circumstances and without the influence of professional development experts. Its form reflects this: configured through the mobile movements of Kate and her husband, seeking out families in need of help (now numbering more than 300), it is the only sponsorship scheme I have found which is based on cash hand-outs (generally deemed the basest, most out-dated form of direct benefit).

Subsequently, and forming a third narrative about Kindu's development, the Trust has become established through Ethiopia's tourism networks, its projects being included in local guides and tours, with Kate creatively mobilising contacts these opportunities afford (see the example of Peter, 6.2.1). Latterly, it has also meant supporters being recruited from 'voluntourists' who spend time working at the Kindu office. Thus, despite its projects' confinement to Ethiopia, Kindu's development has spread through networks of privilege and 'global citizenship' which exceed it. As mentioned elsewhere (5.5.4), these strategies

have vitally allowed Kindu to maximise its small marketing budget and cultivate a highly loyal support base.

A fourth story involves Kindu's intertwining with the networks of two other IDNGOs, blurring its organisational boundaries further. When Kate stepped down in 2009 and the Trust was restructured (discussed subsequently), an opportunity arose to save money by overlapping Kindu's networks with those of IDNGO Link Ethiopia, through the sharing of UK offices, transport, flows of resources and knowledge (*"it's a bit incestuous!!"*¹¹¹). This has afforded the Trust opportunities to make its work more efficient, contributing to its competitive establishment and neoliberal validation. Furthermore, Kindu also benefits from free inclusion on a child sponsorship comparison site hosted by IDNGO SOS Children's Villages. This represents Kindu's biggest UK advertising pull, at no extra cost¹¹². These two examples both show the formulation and strengthening of Kindu's networks by becoming interwoven with those of other IDNGOs.

These various networks strongly resemble Grassroots, being configured around the informal efforts and personhood of Kindu's founder, growing organically in low-cost ways, and interweaving with already-existing networks which exceed organisational boundaries. However, rather than developing into a hub for indigenous welfare efforts, Kindu's projects were started from scratch by Kate, meaning that agency and the power to effect change formally lie more coherently with Kindu's leadership, rather than being fragmented across various sub-efforts (as with Grassroots). Furthermore, Kindu takes a less sustained approach to UK outreach, the locus of its marketing efforts remaining in Ethiopia, not least because of the ready opportunities provided by tourism. I now turn to the networking processes which undergird this positioning.

7.3.2 A 'family atmosphere'? Kindu's networking processes

Four networking processes outlined regarding Grassroots also apply particularly to Kindu- unsurprisingly given their similar parameters (e.g. size, marketing budget) and grounds of emergence –these are charisma, friendship,

¹¹¹ Director of Operations.

¹¹² See previous note.

evangelism and proximal encounters. Regarding charisma, Kindu sponsors often displayed evident admiration for Kate:

“I read about Kate in an Open University magazine. I was so impressed with [her] and what she was doing...She really put herself on the line...one can only admire and want to help her. The big anonymous charities never inspire in the same way.” (Tim, Kindu sponsor)

As with the Ansons, Kate has become known and appreciated by many supporters, who now count her as a personal friend:

“I saw Kate last time she was over, [my neighbour] and I went up and had a chat with her...The thing that I get from it is...a family atmosphere? Because you have Kate come over, and she started Kindu and therefore you're actually talking to the person who [started it].” (Pat, Kindu sponsor)

Kate is therefore positioned as a key evangelical figure in the extension of Kindu's networks, encouraging the conversion of acquaintances into supporters through various performative mechanisms of display and inspiration. Similarly, these supporters also often proceed to evangelise their own social networks. Pat's example shows how this can instigate new local expressions of communal charitable action, configured around particular skills and interests:

“My next-door neighbour...knew Kate when she lived in Plymouth...and because I am a compulsive knitter...we used to knit blankets [for sponsored children] and bags, and send them over. We'd meet once a month, once every couple of months, our group in Liskeard.” (Pat, Kindu sponsor)

Whilst the Kindu Trust does not share Grassroots' Christian affiliation, therefore, both organisations are extended and held together by similarly evangelistic modes of interaction. Here, it is helpful to broadly distinguish two types of evangelist: first, there are those whose passion and creative responsiveness leads them to found new ventures and take ground for the organisation, such as Kate or the Ansons; *initiating* and leading others charismatically in new directions. Second, there are those who advocate existing work, *reflecting* its goods, albeit often in creative, charismatic ways (both types can be exhibited by one person). These efforts are often prompted and shaped by proximal encounters people have with Kindu's projects and staff, and with Ethiopian place, through different kinds of face-to-face visit, forming a fourth networking process central to its establishment.

In addition to these networking processes, I now introduce two others, as yet unmentioned, which are also common to both IDNGOs¹¹³. The first involves strategically interweaving with already-existing networks in order to find supporters; in this case Ethiopian tourism. Figure 7.1 shows one of Kindu's leaflets distributed in Ethiopia around local tourist hotspots, an important material and discursive technology through which its projects have become part of the local tourist trail. Another important strategy has been the working of such information into the patter of tour guides, such that even if people are not enticed on their first visit, Kindu becomes registered as of interest:



Figure 7.1: Kindu Trust leaflet, produced for distribution in Gondar (2012).

"I went to Ethiopia on holiday...I think the tour guide I and my friend were using, I think we must have asked about various things, and he mentioned...the

¹¹³ I illustrate them here with evidence from Kindu, which provides a more interesting set of examples.

founder of Kindu, and I don't think we went to see it on that trip but...in subsequent visits I did go and visit Kindu, and I guess I looked at them on the internet as well.” (Lorraine, Kindu sponsor)

The second networking process involves practical processes of administration and managerial work, and material flows of resources, through which supportive relations ‘at a distance’ are enabled and maintained. Until 2009, this work was almost single-handedly done by Kate. However, her work has not always flowed smoothly, and before the transfer of organisational management in 2009 was causing managerial breakdown, with many existing supporters leaving. Others, particularly those who enjoy a close, colleague-like relationship with the Trust, became actively involved pushing for change, feeling able to engage formatively with the issue (see 6.4.1). What is interesting here is that Kate, despite founding and establishing the Trust and infusing it with creative drive, became a cause of network breakdown rather than network building, de-territorialisation rather than territorialisation. Whilst at one time Kate and the Kindu Trust were synonymous, this synonymy was not able to be upheld coherently, highlighting the provisionality of network parts which seem immutable. Also interesting were the diverse ways in which this network deformation was narrated by different stakeholders, showing how network position frames perspectives:

“The major problem was Kate herself, actually. She couldn't focus on one issue and complicated matters by [taking on projects] which really were irrelevant to the main organisation, in fact were dangerous and were pointed out by me and others that it wasn't an appropriate thing to do. However since she's left...it's become more focused and more efficient again.” (Matthew, Kindu sponsor and visitor)

“We had not heard a lot from Kindu for a while but [a friend] said that was because they were under-staffed and the admin had to take a step back because of all the practical issues taking priority. I felt totally reassured...which is why I continued with my sponsorship.” (Lynn, Kindu sponsor)

Were the Trust's difficulties to do with particular strategies and personalities, or resource problems and service delivery failures? Such differing perspectives precipitate diverse responses, including frustration, anxiety, steps to regain assurance and trust, and steps to intervene. These function as *networking processes* as much as any of the processes mentioned thus far, fuelling Kindu's reformation post-2009 according to particular parameters of ‘good governance’. Consequently, Kindu's acknowledged strengths and weaknesses have been re-

cast, with many sponsors agreeing that it has become more reliable, but that Kate's stepping down has meant a loss of creative vision.

7.3.3 Going above and beyond: Kindu's networked relations

Whilst many different types of relation are visible in the above, I would again like to focus the discussion on staff-donor relations. Emergent from Kindu's organic, informal trajectory and emphasis on face-to-face encounter is an organisational culture of active donor involvement and collaboration (see also 6.3.1). For Pat, who has never visited Ethiopia, friendship with Kate has given her both confidence and opportunity to engage with sponsorship beyond the scheme's official parameters:

"I had a letter to say that [my sponsored children] had moved to a new place to live. And so I thought they still had to walk to get their water, and I said to Kindu that perhaps if they put a tap in...and I like that, that actually there was a need, I thought about it, we decided we would, and it was done! You know, in the next batch of pictures was our tap, and they were so thrilled, you know?" (Pat, Kindu sponsor)

Others have begun to engage more deeply not only with sponsorship, but also with the Trust, volunteering their own time and skills:

"I think it was about two years ago, I volunteered with another charity that is based in [Gondar], and whilst I was there I also went into Kindu's offices and did a bit of work for them there...I've done a business project for them...[and have] been going over as a business advisor" (Lorraine, Kindu sponsor)

Thus, again displaying considerable similarity to Grassroots, the Kindu Trust is characterised by blurry staff-donor relations, allowing for engagements and types of knowledge to come to the fore which would not be recognised within staunchly neoliberal frameworks of 'staff' and 'donors'. Whether in terms of business skills or knitting, or in identifying needs that have gone unnoticed, sponsors are afforded space to become formatively involved in the development process, and to speak and be heard as part of broader organisational governance. These collaborative processes are further encouraged by the proximal (spatial and temporal) inspiration of Kate-as-founder, establishing a precedent for 'ordinary' people spearheading development-based action.

Several political and ethical questions surround this propensity for heightened donor involvements (see also 6.3.1); it is not enough to assume that because they blur neoliberal frameworks that they represent some kind of

viable, promising alternative. Who has the power to speak and who remains silenced? Is this colonial philanthropy all over again? Or is there political potential here for a grassroots development movement based on blurrier articulations of expertise and care, especially given Kindu's thoroughly informal ethos of welcome and 'family' atmosphere? Though the latter will never be romantically struggle-free (as already shown), might these struggles foster more promising dialogue?

A tentative line of difference can be drawn here between Kindu and Grassroots, despite their similar propensity for blurry staff-donor relations. Grassroots sponsors, particularly those who attend trips to Tanzania, frequently acknowledged during interview experiences which led them to reflect on their own position more humbly. Acknowledgements were made of the projects as the domain of local people with far more expertise than UK donors, and of the Ansons as far better stewards of donations than sponsors (see 7.2.2). Thus, upon experiencing the independent momentum of Grassroots' projects, sponsors often end up relinquishing claims on their own right to intervene, and revise their prospective contribution of their own agency. At Kindu, however, this is almost the opposite. No interviewee admitted being humbled by recognition of the expertise of local people (though some were happy to trust Kate/Kindu with their money), and most end up experiencing a fuller sense of their own agency and potential to contribute because of the space Kindu allows them to engage formatively with the process. Thus, agency becomes tipped towards donors in a way which seems to foster less postcolonial humility, even though it blurs neoliberal boundaries of power, authority and expertise.

One cause for hope, perhaps, is the clear predication of most of these blurred relationships not on indulgent notions of global citizenship, nor on ideas of consumer choice, but instead on responsiveness to dynamic relations of care, oiled by the informalities of friendship. Thus, Kindu's networking processes may yet provide more open-ended foundations for dialogue, though these may not at present be receiving purposeful management.

7.3.4 Concluding remarks

So far, across the two case studies, charitable space seemingly involves far more than bounded notions of sponsors, staff, recipients, gifts and

generosity. Charitable responses emerge out of fluid, changeable assemblages, which encompass ways of relating that exceed pity and patronage (including friendship, inspiration, respect and honour), involve many different places (including homes, workplaces, holiday destinations, hospitals, aeroplanes and postal services) and enfold notions of community and belonging which are more intricate and multiple than grand universalist claims (e.g. friendship groups, families, schools, colleague networks and knitting circles).

Reading the Kindu Trust in a networked way unearths intricate dynamics, concerns and possibilities which not only shape its networks, but also vitally configure the ethical and political merits of its charitable activity. Such an approach adds processual detail to the claims made in chapter 5 about IDNGOs of certain sizes and positionings, exploring how these claims work out in practice. It also bolsters claims made in chapter 6 about how charity donation is prompted by complex relational dynamics which exceed pity-inspiring appeals. Thus, it allows for lines of similarity to be drawn between Grassroots and Kindu, as well as for points of divergence and specificity to be acknowledged and unravelled. I now turn to a very different case study- Plan International –in order to develop this networked approach further.

7.4 Plan UK

My third case study is Plan UK, British wing of IDNGO Plan International, one of the largest child sponsorship IDNGOs in existence and the one which claims to have originally founded child sponsorship in the 1930s (see 2.2.2). The trajectory of this case study unfolds differently to the previous two, particularly because of access issues in my empirical work. Gaining access to Plan UK's networks proved very difficult, with many lines of enquiry being followed to no avail (see chapter 4). The culmination of these efforts was one telephone interview with a senior staff member, six email interviews with sponsors recruited via Facebook, and interviews with four other sponsors (one telephone, three face-to-face) recruited via- unashamedly -more accidental methods. Whilst these encounters were illuminating, given the scarcity of material it seemed (at the time) tempting to shelve Plan UK as an analytical

focal point. However, I soon realised that the difficulties I experienced were telling regarding its co-constitutive relations and practices.

As such, the following account retains Plan UK as a point of interest, and is structured in two sections. The first overviews Plan UK's broader networked situation and reflects on the politics of its networking processes and relations, using the staff interview, the email interviews and supplementary material sourced online. The second explores the remainder of the empirical material, which is insightful regarding another set of charitable networks which have developed around Plan UK's edges. I use this material to account more fully for how multiple, diverse charitable networks can interdependently (though not always comfortably) develop and co-function.

7.4.1 Plan UK: isolating the masses?

British-born Plan International has its headquarters in Surrey and 20 national supporter branches. Child sponsorship makes up c.60% of its total income (in 2012: c.£531 million), and 45% of the total funds raised by London-based Plan UK (in 2012: £56.4 million)¹¹⁴, with the rest coming largely from corporate/institutional grants and donations, and other public appeals. Like most national branches of international aid organisations, Plan UK (henceforth Plan) exists to grow and maintain a support base, to lobby government, and to cultivate advantageous partnerships (e.g. with businesses, government); rather than to direct and manage development projects.

Plan's networks, co-ordinated by its London staff team (comprising 156 paid employees¹¹⁵), take shape through five main sets of networking processes. Firstly, Plan hosts and partakes in high-profile events, whether lectures, debates and dinners, or marches and lobbying events (being a child-focused IDNGO, these usually involve school-children). These focus on London and other metropolitan areas, and target decision-makers and other influential bodies. Secondly, Plan cultivates partnerships with influential individuals and organisations, including the government, universities, banks, businesses, other charities and trusts, as well as organisations-come-movements like the Girl Guides. These partnerships not only afford influential media and fundraising

¹¹⁴ These statistics are all available on Plan's website: <http://www.plan-uk.org/>, accessed 15/07/13.

¹¹⁵ See previous note.

opportunities¹¹⁶, but also often lead to joint events and campaigns, further raising Plan’s profile. Thirdly, Plan garners the support of celebrities, whether royals, singers or television personalities, particularly those deemed appealing to their target demographics for sponsorship¹¹⁷. These may confer legitimacy onto Plan by patronising its work (see also Repo and Yrjola, 2011), or may get involved more actively in campaigns, events or project visits (followed by cameras, of course). Such supporters clearly boost Plan’s popular appeal, though details of the terms of their involvement are not publicly available.

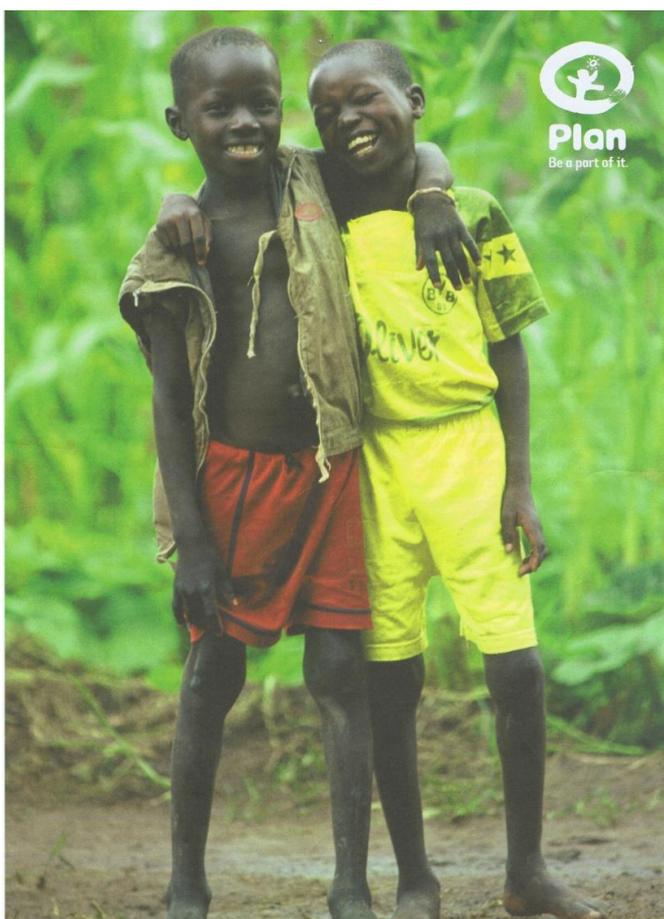


Figure 7.2: Printed Plan advert, published 2010.

Related to this, and fourthly, Plan produces an array of advertising material, usually aimed at mass media spaces, including television adverts, newspaper inserts and other printed promotions (see Figure 7.2), website and social media efforts, and cold calling. These strategies flank various giving mechanisms (‘products’¹¹⁸), of which child sponsorship is just one, broadening Plan’s socio-economic accessibility and testifying to the contemporary Third Sector fidelity to neoliberal notions of donor choice:

“...the sponsorship option which is £15 a month can be a bit high for people, so we’ve recognised that and we’ve diversified our products. So we’ve got a girls’ fund project, a forgotten children project...” (Supporter Relations Manager, Plan UK)

¹¹⁶ For a recent list of Plan’s major and corporate donors, see <http://www.plan-uk.org/about-us/annual-report/thank-you>, accessed 12/07/13.

¹¹⁷ Supporter Relations Manager.

¹¹⁸ See previous note.

When people sign up to sponsor, Plan deploys particular strategies to govern their sponsoring behaviour, sending them regular updates, magazines (see also 5.3.3), and encouragements to write to sponsored children:

“...in our welcome pack we send an example letter; we’ve just introduced something called Plan Postbox on our website, which allows sponsors to send an email to [their sponsored child]. So we try to make it as easy as possible. And 10 weeks after a sponsor signs up with us, we send them what we call a welcome pack 2, [so] if a sponsor has already written we say ‘thankyou so much for writing, would you consider writing again’, and if they haven’t to say ‘just to let you know, it would be fantastic if you could write...” (Supporter Relations Manager, Plan UK)

Finally, Plan encourages its supporters, including its 114,000 sponsors, to get involved beyond financial giving. Sponsors may visit Plan’s projects and meet sponsored children, and are often subsequently recruited by Plan as volunteers, embodying and speaking about its work:

“Plan speakers bring our work to life! Are you member of a club – a women’s club, church group, rotary club or similar?...Plan can arrange a FREE talk by a speaker from our network of over 50 people about their personal experiences of Plan’s work. Plan speakers are fully trained volunteers. They are dedicated and knowledgeable supporters who have first-hand experience of how lives can be transformed...They can deliver presentations suitable for small or large group settings, lasting anywhere from 15 minutes to up to 1 hour.”¹¹⁹

As evident here, this feeds into the evangelistic work of other supporters within their own social networks, contributing to what Plan’s Supporter Relations Manager praised as ‘Member Get Member’ support-raising, whereby existing supporters informally persuade others to join. Plan also encourages and resources supporters to host their own fundraising and awareness-raising events, post its links on their personal websites and blogs, follow Plan on Facebook and Twitter, and take Plan’s work into their workplaces and schools, offering a variety of ideas for sponsors to performatively display support for Plan within their everyday social environments. As an aside, this mention of blogs and social media sites suggests a growing importance of various online presences to the making of charitable space, interweaving with traditional spaces and recruitment efforts and allowing for new types of discussion and interaction. Interestingly, many IDNGOs involved in this research cited such spaces as increasingly important for enticing initial interest from people and

¹¹⁹ <http://www.plan-uk.org/what-you-can-do/existing-sponsors/other-ways-to-help/>, accessed 16/07/13.

developing already-existing support, but not necessarily productive in prompting decisions to sponsor (these are perceived as too weighty to be prompted easily through the bite-sized interactions allowed by Facebook or Twitter).

These five groups of networking processes are designed to be as comprehensive as possible, targeting a vast array of spaces and social groups. However, Plan's most productive recruitment methods (besides its largely laissez-faire Member Get Member approach) remain mass media and internet-based¹²⁰, and thus particularly individualised. Unless they meet an enthusiastic supporter, people tend to encounter Plan on their own: when reading the paper, surfing online, watching television or opening the post; as a result, Plan has less opportunity to interweave its promotional discourses with those of particular moral communities, compounding its discursive 'freight' (Cloke et al, 2007) and tapping into collective senses of meaning and momentum. Both Jane and Lizzie (recruited through Facebook) testify to this kind of individualised encounter:

"I had often thought of sponsoring a child never got round to it. We had previously fostered for many years. I was ill with pleurisy and watching a movie...about a man who sponsored a young girl in china!! During the break I saw a [Plan] advert...and I knew I had to do something so I checked out sites and liked what Plan were about" (Jane, Plan sponsor)

"I saw an advertisement in the TV about sponsoring a child from Plan and it really appealed to me as something nice that I would love to do. I went online straight after, chose the place, age and sex of the child I would like to sponsor and waited for a reply." (Lizzie, Plan sponsor)

Thus, the organisational face of Plan remains slightly obscured to the public (starkly contrasting Kindu and Grassroots, where senior staff are personally known by supporters), accessible only in highly mediated, prescribed formats. Further to this, Plan has also moved away from face-to-face methods of recruitment it had previously used:

"At one point we really went into face-to-face fundraising, using guys on the street who would talk to people as they were walking by. But after about a year of doing that we started analysing the figures and we recognised that...people were dropping off really quickly. So we recognise that child sponsorship is quite an emotive ask, one that I think you really have to consider, rather than just [sign up on the street]." (Supporter Relations Manager, Plan UK)

Whether necessitated by the parameters of child sponsorship or not, these networking strategies make organisational legitimacy more difficult to establish.

¹²⁰ Supporter Relations Manager.

Even Member Get Member-type strategies convey relational qualities such as friendship and mutual trust upon Plan by default, rather than their being the stuff of organisation-donor encounters. This is not helped by Plan's size, which necessitates a highly professionalised, structured donor interface¹²¹.

These processes and relations seemingly undergird Plan's apparent congruence with neoliberal accounts of charity, fostering staunchly defended lines of expertise and bureaucracy, emphases on service delivery and reliance on highly individualised marketing strategies. There seems to be less scope for informal, open-ended relations between Plan and its supporters, and the loyalty and legitimacy which this so easily cultivates¹²². My own experience as researcher testifies to this: I was unable to get easy access into the organisation, Plan was unwilling to grant me access to any sponsors, and snowballing from those I did recruit was impossible, for they each sponsor in isolation¹²³. It was through these processes of repeated failure and constriction, however, that I fell upon a parallel set of networks, representing both an offshoot from Plan and a surrogate configuration grafted onto it. I now turn to these networks, emphasising their propensity to muddy Plan's 'neoliberal' appearance as well as the apparent spatial fixity of its charitable flows.

7.4.2 Offshoots and surrogates: the Lalibela Trust

Extensive online searching for Plan sponsors yielded one particularly interesting set of results, in the form of an informal website run from Glastonbury, Somerset. In this section, I overview the charitable networks into which this website drew me, their co-constitutive processes and relations, and their interweaving with Plan's networks. I then discuss the political dynamics and difficulties fostered by their heterogeneity. In the following sub-section, I use the example to reflect on the tangled nature of charitable space.

In brief, there exists a communal effort based in Glastonbury, and focused on the town of Lalibela in Ethiopia, which encompasses several

¹²¹ Exceptions include private philanthropists, who donate in excess of £25,000 per annum (interview with Hugh and Catherine Sharp), understandably courted and managed by Plan in a more bespoke manner.

¹²² It is therefore unsurprising that Plan relies on celebrity endorsements and the testimonials of sponsors who have visited its projects, using these as proxies through which sponsors can derive senses of accessibility and legitimacy.

¹²³ A similar approach taken with ActionAid yielded similar results, showing that both IDNGOs share similar lines of strength and weakness, not least because of their size.

development projects including child sponsorship. This effort began in 2003 when retired Glastonbury couple Hugh and Catherine Sharp, both of whom have medical professional backgrounds, stumbled upon poor conditions in Lalibela hospital whilst holidaying in Ethiopia (see 6.2.1). This triggered in both of them a strong empathetic desire to 'do something', leading to regular trips back to Ethiopia since 2003, the instigation of several charitable projects (mostly healthcare-based), the enrolment of various individuals and organisations in Glastonbury, and liaisons with the few NGOs working in the Lalibela area. As the following anecdote explains, these NGOs included Plan and, via some interlocking UK networks, also the Kindu Trust:

Catherine: "I've been a volunteer with Save the Children for many years, [so we] approached them first and said 'are you working anywhere in [the Lalibela] area?', and they said 'we're not, we're further north, but Plan UK is there', and so that's when Hugh contacted them..."

Hugh: "Plan UK was the only international NGO in the area. [But] we also heard of Devon Aid, which is in Exeter, based south-west of Addis Ababa, and we went to some of their meetings and they were going out to Ethiopia, a lady was going out, and she had known Kate Eshete, because Kate [is from Devon]. She wanted to go for a week to Gondar to help out Kate, and we said 'any chance of getting a week in Lalibela as well?' So we did that, and we'd made contact with Plan, so when we got to Lalibela Plan took us around...[and] we spent a week in Gondar with Kate, helping going round, I was doing medicals in the huts." (Hugh and Catherine Sharp)

Whilst the Sharps personally support Kindu by sponsoring a child, they have directed the bulk of their efforts into a partnership with Plan which lasted from 2005 until 2011, raising a total of £86,000. They were treated by Plan as private philanthropic donors, being allowed to select from a priority list the projects which their money would fund¹²⁴. Since this partnership ended, the Sharps have begun partnering with another English couple, their efforts gaining formal recognition from the Charities Commission in May 2012 as the 'Lalibela Trust'. In part, these complex networks represent an offshoot from Plan, which fostered the Lalibela Trust's early development and received the majority of its funds. In other ways, however, they represent independent efforts which have benefited from having Plan as a surrogate framework, but which have retained their heterogeneity.

¹²⁴ See also <http://www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/partnerships/private-donors/> (accessed 11/09/13) for information about Plan's management of private philanthropic donors.

As part of the Sharps' efforts to raise local support for their work, Plan child sponsorship in Lalibela has been taken up by several schools, businesses and individuals in the Glastonbury area. The Sharps have been able to supplement sponsorship connections by taking out donated clothing and school equipment, and by ferrying more regular, personalised dialogue between sponsors and sponsored children than would otherwise be possible through Plan. This in itself represents an interesting DIY supplement to sponsorship's traditional rhythms and parameters, driven forward by the Sharps' initiative. Indeed, the Glastonbury support networks are, predominantly, configured around loyalty to the Sharps, rather than to Plan (see also Figure 7.3), demonstrating yet again the importance of charismatic, inspirational individuals in encouraging everyday social networks to charitable action:



Figure 7.3: Screenshot from the Sharps' home-run website, detailing their personal experiences in Ethiopia.

“The lovely thing is that Hugh and Catherine head out every year, so we have that personal link...[they] are really good, they come in and they’ve got CDs of what they saw, and we get updated on [our sponsored child’s] development...[through the Sharps] we sent out quite a few hoodies and skirts and tops...sweatshirts and fleeces and things...we did have an email from somebody who...had spotted a child in the Ethiopian highlands with one of our

sweatshirts on!! And they emailed to say 'couldn't believe it when I saw this!'"

(Louise, headmistress, Primary A)

Through these informal networking efforts playing around Plan's edges, the Lalibela Trust and its child sponsorships have become about performing various segments of Glastonbury community, with schools (see also section 6.3.3), businesses and the town council becoming involved, and the two towns being formally twinned in 2007. Child sponsorship and charity thence unfold in multiple ways and for different purposes, being used variously for cementing a town link, supporting friends and colleagues, investing in the reputation of local businesses and educating children.

The kinds of relationship and the spaces being co-constituted here differ greatly from those described in the previous sub-section. They bear more similarities to the networked relations of Kindu and Grassroots, particularly in their [over]reliance on the characters and efforts of the Sharps, rather than being configured around sponsorship or around Plan:

"As far as the child sponsorship is concerned, it's simply because we do a lot of talks...I mean, to be absolutely truthful about it, really it's just us two [driving this forward]. And if anything happened to us two, the whole thing would fold."

(Hugh Sharp)

Here, then, is a surrogate charitable network, functioning inseparably from Plan but not being subsumed into it, with its own dynamics of leadership, development agenda and PR. This heterogeneity, whilst vitally co-productive of charitable space, also contributed to the break-down of the Sharps' partnership with Plan, with the Sharps eventually seeking an organisation that would allow them more flexibility and independence:

F: "On the website it says something about you divorcing yourselves from Plan not very long ago, something about them capping the projects?"

Hugh: Yes, I think we were being polite, because we were leaving anyway! We had already met Norman and Carole, and we were already building a health post...and also we wanted to concentrate on...the safe motherhood project, long-term family planning, delivery kits and the fistula women."

This separation from Plan was further encouraged by a break-down in the collaborative relationship the Sharps had established with Plan staff in Lalibela. Whilst this relationship in some ways shows that outside-the-box engagements are possible within seemingly corporatised IDNGOs, this unfolded through

terms of private philanthropy rather than collaboration, with Plan failing to take kindly to the Sharps' desire to engage more formatively, and more critically:

Hugh: "We've had some concerns about Plan...one of the attractions is that they say that 100% [of our money] goes to the projects...about 4 years ago we were talking to the Lalibela director and I was asking him about the finances and he showed us the spreadsheet of how the money's spent...and that 100% goes to the projects, but it involves having people fly from Addis to Gondar to Lalibela for a meeting, their overnight accommodation, their meals...I think Plan in the end got a bit fed up with us really.

Catherine: Yes, we kept nit-picking with them, didn't we...They're saying that this training is essential, ok I can see that, but we don't want to provide that, we'd like them to get that money from somewhere else..."

These reflections show that the Sharps' interactions with Plan have not simply been about service delivery, but have also been about the disturbance of lines of professional expertise, about trust, and about critical reflections on the politics of large aid organisations. A final nail in the coffin involved Plan's overnight decision to raise the annual amount of money required for private philanthropy from £10,000 to £25,000, which immediately excluded the Sharps:

"They upped the annual amount to £25,000, they'd gone from 10 to 25, well we've never raised more than £22,000 a year so there was no way. I mean maybe Plan thought 'let's get rid of them, let's just up it to £25,000', it was a jump 2½ times what we normally paid..." (Hugh Sharp)

Hugh's insinuation that this policy change was a deliberate move to exclude them for being too much hassle perhaps shows the extent to which their relationship with Plan had deteriorated by 2011. Obviously the interlocking of the Lalibela Trust's networks with Plan's will continue as long as the child sponsorships taken on in Glastonbury continue, though it remains to be seen whether these have acquired sufficient loyalty to Plan to continue beyond the lifespan of Plan's Lalibela project. In sum, it would seem that the dynamism and independence of the Sharps, as this has intersected with the neoliberal configurations of Plan, not only contributed to the productive drawing together of charitable networks, but also to their breaking down.

7.4.3 Emergent points about charitable space: knots, tangles and braids

The Lalibela Trust is of particular interest to theorisations of charitable space because of the extent to which its relations have formed and held together by being interwoven with Plan's networks, rather than existing in

separate spheres of 'neoliberal' and 'alternative/grassroots'. Charitable space does not consist of autonomous, coherent entities each with their own consistent, stable properties, but of fluid, intertwining 'tangles' (Allen, 2012), interrelating to fold and pleat space. This sometimes configures productive patterns with predictable structures and rhythms, more akin to plaits or braids, but can also develop difficult knots which eventually lead to the network being broken down and reformulated.

Thus, whilst the networking processes used by Plan quite clearly produce very different types of relation to those produced by the Lalibela Trust (itself bearing more similarities to Grassroots and Kindu), this does not preclude their respective networks, networking processes and relations becoming interwoven, in both productive and complicating ways. This adds weight to the argument that large IDNGOs cannot possibly be comprehensively, evenly neoliberal, no matter the extent to which they subscribe to neoliberal structures and values. Their networks hang together provisionally with others through complex dynamics of co-dependence, leaking into and enfolding multiple other projects of identity and community, other rhythms, interactions and flows of meaning, with no pre-given relational outcome. In this instance an ensuing tussle, emergent (it would seem) from various clashes between Plan's bureaucracy with the Sharps' informal, outspoken approach, contributed to the gradual extrication of the two sets of networks, though not neatly or completely, with straggling strands of fragmentary, partial supportive connection remaining.

These processes do not preclude attempts to plait and braid relations to fit certain parameters or conform to certain orthodoxies, including moves to enfold and manage the Sharps as private philanthropists, and moves to manage the support of the Glastonbury public by steering them towards child sponsorship. Interesting here, nevertheless, are the interactions between such attempts to demarcate, order and manage, and the inevitable heterogeneity and porosity of charitable efforts; between attempts to tether and stabilise charitable space, and lines of flight which de-territorialise it. Building on these insights and concerns, I now turn to my final case study: that of Compassion UK.

7.5 Compassion UK

My final case study is large evangelical Christian IDNGO Compassion UK. Like Plan UK, Compassion UK is a branch of an international IDNGO (Compassion International) and is therefore concerned more with recruiting and managing sponsors than with project policy or implementation. Whilst Compassion International was founded in 1952, Compassion UK (henceforth Compassion) has only been independently working since 1999, but has since established an extensive support base such that it now rivals longer-established Christian IDNGOs including Tearfund and World Vision.

With 68,000 sponsors contributing £27,000,000 per annum (the vast majority of its total UK income)¹²⁵, Compassion appears a medium-sized, middle-income IDNGO compared to the leading names in child sponsorship (Plan, ActionAid, World Vision). However, its avowed restriction to marketing within Christian networks and spaces (cf. the mass media) means that Compassion's size is actually indicative of dominance within these networks, achieved in a remarkably short time. In this section I examine multiple narratives regarding how this dominance has been achieved, inscribing Compassion with particular politics. Throughout, I draw in elements from the previous three case studies, since many of their characteristics and processes are relevant here.

7.5.1 'In Jesus' name': Compassion's networks and networking processes

Several stories can be told about Compassion's establishment since its implantation from the USA. Firstly, it benefited significantly from a precedent partnership with established Christian IDNGO Tearfund, managing its sponsorship scheme from 1975 until 1999, and then taking over the scheme completely and becoming independent. Thus, Compassion's early development was fostered and protected by Tearfund and its branding legitimised by their long-standing association (see also 5.5.4). Like Kindu's connections with SOS and Link Ethiopia, then, Compassion's networks have partly formulated in conjunction with those of other IDNGOs.

Since independence, and secondly, Compassion has sought a regular presence at many large-scale Christian events (e.g. conferences, leadership summits, ministry days, festivals), as part of an intensive quest for growth and

¹²⁵ Compassion UK, 2012.

brand establishment. This can mean the presence of stands and promotional materials, or airtime for adverts or visiting speakers. Compassion also places adverts in widely read Christian magazines and seeks association with successful evangelical Christian ministries and organisations. For instance, at the Soul Survivor festivals, a series of annual evangelical Christian youth conferences in Somerset attracting c.30,000 people¹²⁶, Compassion is one of the sole sponsors, benefiting from airtime prior to meetings for promotional videos, a large stand in the resources centre and the hosting of several cafes around the site, decked out in its signature blue and yellow. This material and discursive interlinking with credible Christian spaces and bodies establishes legitimacy for Compassion, and allows it to capitalise on the affective atmosphere of the events (see my own experience, chapter 1), whilst reaching thousands of people. Thirdly, and relatedly, Compassion garners the support of notable Christian individuals (e.g. speakers, singers), gaining plentiful advertising outlets and benefiting from the glow of Christian celebrity¹²⁷.

These efforts combine with professional promotions, through which powerful associations are made between Compassion's brand, sponsorship model and faith¹²⁸, not least via a discursive valuation of 'personal relationship' which brings these together coherently whilst countering allegations of large-scale corporatism. Compassion's sponsorship model, for instance, heavily emphasises connections between sponsors and sponsored children:

*"In a world where more than a billion children live on less than two US dollars a day, Compassion believes connecting one child with one sponsor is the most strategic way to end childhood poverty."*¹²⁹

These various networking processes strongly resemble those of Plan: events, mass marketing, organisational partnerships and celebrity. An important distinction between Compassion and Plan, however, surrounds Compassion's restriction to evangelical Christian spaces, rather than foraying into the mass media (see also 5.6.3). This is partly ideological; based on a valorisation of specifically Christian anti-poverty action, as well as concern that marketing in 'secular' spaces and communities would encourage dilution of Compassion's

¹²⁶ <http://soulsurvivor.com/about-us/what-we-do>, accessed 25/07/13.

¹²⁷ See <http://www.compassionuk.org/ambassadors-and-partners>, accessed 28/08/13.

¹²⁸ E.g. Compassion's 'One Act' promotion, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IW25nhiEaY>, accessed 29/08/13.

¹²⁹ <http://www.compassionuk.org/what-we-do>, accessed 27/05/13.

faith (deemed unacceptable compromise). It is also strategic, however, since this position enables Compassion to capitalise on its evangelical ethos explicitly in appeals, without fear of alienating its target audience.

Importantly, however, this networked decision also imbues Compassion's charitable space with particular politics. For instance, Compassion's establishment becomes characterised markedly by practices of faith-based boundary-drawing, and the defence of rigid formulations of evangelical Christianity. Furthermore, its restriction to Christian spaces means that it jostles directly with Tearfund and World Vision for charitable donations, as well as with a host of other smaller Christian IDNGOs, prompting stiff competition and inviting allegations about the neoliberalisation of Christian charity (see 5.5.3).

A fourth way in which Compassion's support networks have been configured involves its systematic promotional targeting of individual churches. Like Plan, Compassion produces resources aimed specifically at particular communities (in this case churches) and encourages supporters to voluntarily evangelise these spaces, complementing its mass top-down strategies. Unlike Plan, however, Compassion applies these strategies in a much more systematic, formal way. Its fidelity to 'the local church' is intertwined strongly with Biblical belief¹³⁰; its strategy being to infiltrate individual UK churches through a network of nearly 600 volunteer 'advocates'¹³¹- existing sponsors willing to promote Compassion in a more sustained way (see 5.5.2). Advocates represent key intermediaries who, through their zealous evangelistic work *reflect* the goods of Compassion to others (the second type of evangelistic activity identified in 7.3.2), and become another vehicle for Compassion's 'relational' ethic. They receive regular encouragement through a hierarchy of regional managers and events, fusing their efforts with organisational resources and strategies.

Building on advocate efforts, and again bolstered by ideological fidelity to personal relationship, Compassion has recently sought to deepen the

¹³⁰ Similarly, Compassion disseminates its sponsorship projects *only* through local churches. This does not necessarily represent discrimination regarding who receives aid (indeed, Compassion's evangelical agenda propels its work outside church walls), but rather represents both Biblical and professional belief in the virtues of church-based work, as well as strategic moves to establish rapport in recipient communities and reduce administration costs.

¹³¹ South-West Regional Manager.

commitment of individual churches to its work, through two further mechanisms. The first is 'OurCompassion', a social networking facility where sponsors can explore Compassion's projects and network with other sponsors (see Figure 7.4). Through this, Compassion's support networks become comprised of a mesh of cross-cutting relations, rather than individual sponsors hidden away in their own homes, or packaged in coherent, autonomous pockets of church community. The second is a church partnerships scheme, whereby congregations target their individual sponsorships on a specific project in the Global South (also run by an individual church), allowing Compassion to develop a link between the two churches through further dialogue opportunities, church-to-church prayer support and exchange visits.

The screenshot displays the 'OurCompassion' online forums interface. At the top, there is a search bar labeled 'Find a forum...'. Below it is a table listing various forum topics. To the right of the table is a 'TAG CLOUD' section with several tags, and below that is an invitation to join the community.

FORUM	GROUP	POSTS	LAST POST
Prayer Children Pray for and post details about children in need of sponsorship	Compassion Community	1,728	Today
Child Updates In this private forum, share letters, photos, and updates received from your sponsored and correspondent children, and introduce new your new children to the community	Sponsors Only	2,418	Today
Sponsor Community Chat with other sponsors in this private forum	Sponsors Only	3,003	Today
Letters and Gifts Ask questions and share ideas for what to write and include with your letters	Compassion Community	867	Today
Prayer Requests Pray for children around the world and for each other in this private forum	Sponsors Only	603	Yesterday
Sponsorship Experience Ask questions, share ideas, and talk about your experiences with child sponsorship and child poverty	Compassion Community	738	Yesterday
Community & Fun A place for connecting with people, other community topics and fun conversations	Compassion Community	535	Yesterday
Teen Sponsors A private forum for teenagers who sponsor to talk about their experiences	Sponsors Only	262	27 Aug 2013

TAG CLOUD

250 kids adorable advocacy advocate advocates advocating for children africa auntie's angels bangladesh Debre Zeit **EAGLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER** gh624 ghana GU986 Gulele Guenet **PH462 PH-462 Philippines** project ET206 project ET506 sponsor visit UG402 photos

Invite friends to join the community by entering their email address(es) and writing them a brief message. You can enter multiple email addresses, just separate them with a semi-colon.

Figure 7.4: Screenshot from OurCompassion online forums, showing conversation topics, taken 29/08/13.

In sum, Compassion's UK development comprises multiple marketing strategies in a comprehensive, multi-tiered attempt to infiltrate evangelical Christian communities and spaces, interweaving organisational discourses with their already-existing social, material, discursive and ideological fabrics. I now further examine how these interweaving processes unfold, by attending specifically to Compassion advocacy as a networking process.

7.5.2 Zealous, belief-full, *political* bodies: Compassion advocacy as a networking process

I now consider the dynamics of Compassion advocacy, beginning with an overview of its main components and its potency as a vehicle for interweaving organisational strategy with church life. I then note ways in which it extends and strengthens Compassion's networks, as well as how it might foster contestation, tension and negotiation.

As mobile proponents of Compassion discourse, advocates seek to mobilise supportive relations within their own social networks (usually but not limited to churches), embodying and disseminating Compassion in conversation with others. Their liaisons with staff, their official recognition and training by Compassion combine to position advocacy as a quasi-staff role, governed by a wealth of organisational resources include materials for services and specific congregational segments (e.g. young people), and ideas for intertwining Compassion with the rhythms of church life (e.g. permanent displays, one-off events, regular letter-writing groups).

An illustration of how these resources, bodies and practices productively intertwine is provided by Compassion's annual campaign 'Compassion Sunday', a one-day event designed to promote sponsorship during Sunday services. Advocates don bright blue shirts adorned with Compassion logos to visually signify their support, and depending on the scale of its adoption, congregations can be presented with short DVDs, presentations, dramas and activities for children and youth. Sermons, prayers and sung worship can also be orientated around relevant subjects (e.g. poverty, charity) so that for one day, church spaces are entirely given over to promoting Compassion child sponsorship. Discourses of development charity are thus overlapped with Christian moral landscapes and performatively routed through the Compassion brand, through spaces of individual churches, evangelistic bodies and spiritual praxis.

As a transient device, Compassion Sunday maps onto more frequent advocate fundraising efforts (e.g. Figure 7.5) and permanent displays in church buildings. These temporal geographies embed sponsorship in church life, materially and discursively demarcating Christian community and ethical place, constructing churches as natural places for spiritual investment and generosity. During research I partook in two letter-writing meetings held by a church in Gloucestershire, and one at a church in Somerset, each of which served as a

semi-regular instalment of Compassion encouragement seeking to govern sponsor behaviours. The groups also served as spaces for friendships to blossom, copious tea and cake to be consumed and news to be shared, adding multiple other layers of proximal caring interaction to their stated purposes. Thus, what may begin as a particularly individualistic style of charitable action becomes intertwined with other senses of collective being and caring engagement, investing in intra-congregational relations as much as in sponsor-child or sponsor-staff relations.



Figure 7.5: Compassion advocate Fran, manning an event stand. Contributed by subject, used with permission.

The work of advocates therefore allows Compassion to benefit from similar networking processes to those which hold Kindu and Grassroots together: charisma, friendship, different kinds of evangelism, already-existing social infrastructures,

and elements of proximal encounter. Supported as they are by extensive resources, however, advocate efforts do not always work out as intended. Some admitted experiencing difficulty gaining access to churches, particularly across denominations:

“I initially tried to speak in other churches but was not terribly successful in getting invitations...it can be quite disheartening to begin with” (Robert, Compassion advocate)

Others bemoaned practical and material constraints: at the Gloucestershire letter-writing group mentioned previously, for instance, the resident advocate expressed frustration at her church’s lack of a permanent building, preventing her from setting up a Compassion stand. Other advocates described Christian

networks as over-fished in terms of giving opportunities and encouragements¹³²:

“We are not supported by our church leadership and are unable to promote or host Compassion [events]. It was getting to the stage at our church, a few years ago, that someone was getting up [to endorse a charity/mission venture] every Sunday. It must have been a difficult decision for the leadership...People can only do so much.” (Caroline, Compassion advocate)

Despite associations as fertile spaces for charity, then, church spaces can actually be uneven (Barnett et al, 2005). The negotiations here suggest that Compassion’s strategy of targeting individual churches necessarily means engaging with the power dynamics already co-constituting these spaces, whether these involve church leadership or tensions surrounding the practical contents of faith-full lives. In another church where research was undertaken, the all-too-apparent enthusiasm of the resident Compassion advocate served to undermine her efforts, stimulating feelings of inferiority and defensiveness in others. Here, Compassion’s romanticisation of personal relationship breaks down, producing unintended consequences.

Finally, not all advocates perform their role as Compassion suggests, with some using their position to critique Compassion (see 6.4.1) and others owing to failing to balance advocacy with other commitments:

“It’s difficult finding the time. Christians tend to lead busy lives! When you add up helping with youth group, Sunday School, home group, music group, welcome team, plus then doing things outside church like sport and seeing family and friends, and working full-time, and then trying to do other things like decorate the house...time is scarce!” (Lottie, Compassion advocate)

Thus, the very strategies which prove so successful for Compassion, in many ways prove leaky, double-edged and unpredictable (as with Kate Eshete, and the Sharps). The organised hierarchy of Compassion advocacy depends on the successful enrolment of many other, less manageable networked relations, materials and spaces around Compassion’s edges. Thus, Compassion’s networks depend not only on powerful promotions and coherent discourses, but also on particular personalities, the politics of church buildings and leadership decisions, and tensions within the nexus between modernity and faith.

¹³² Similar limitations are being felt at other points across Compassion’s networks: staff also admitted that their target spaces are beginning to run dry, reaching largely the same portion of Christendom year-on-year.

In sum, positioning advocacy as a networking process affords insight into the large-scale strategies rolled out as part of national-scale IDNGO marketing, particularly in ways which mobilise networking qualities associated more with smaller, grassroots IDNGOs; and the effort which goes into aligning these strategies with staff practices, promotional discourses, organisational ideology and target communities and spaces. Capitalising on potential congruencies here has helped Compassion establish a sponsorship empire, though of course this effort is marked with incoherence and instability as much as order. Within this, advocacy testifies once again to the importance of face-to-face inspiration and embodied evangelistic performances in environments where friendship and rapport can be fostered over time: not only in stimulating charitable action, but also as an antidote to the corporate feel of Compassion's large-scale, professionalised appearance. However, advocacy also highlights the unevenness of charitable space, with the efforts of advocates being shot through with difficulty, and often producing unintended, unmanageable results. Thus, no matter how coherently Compassion's multi-tiered approach may hang together, its practical working-out remains provisional, with charitable space being co-constituted by multiple other flows of power and authority, senses of opportunity and resistance, other agendas and concerns, all of which combine to fluidly configure space for charitable response.

7.5.3 Appraising Compassion's networked relations

Compassion's networks owe much of their coherence to romantic ideological valorisations of 'personal relationship' (read friendship, familial care and Christian love). This, I argue here, is a particularly shrewd strategy which works multiply to extend and strengthen its networks.

Firstly, it muddies staff-donor relations, blurring organisational boundaries and hierarchies (much like previous case studies). I was surprised, upon visiting Compassion HQ, at the extent to which valorisations of one-to-one care (influenced by beliefs in the centrality of personal relationships with God) were coherently, practically adhered to (see 5.6.1), enabling staff to perform their faith whilst balancing out Compassion's corporate appearance with ethics of unconditional love and welcome. These attitudes fill staff practices with self-sacrificial behaviour, borne of a desire to draw near to the invisible God,

whether or not this stimulates definable measures of success. Thus, whilst Compassion confirms a neoliberal distinction between staff and donors more so than less formalised organisations like Kindu and Grassroots, its embrace of such ethics hints at further complexity. It also contrasts the staunchly defended boundaries of faith which Compassion simultaneously holds to (mentioned previously), showing a co-existence of both evangelical and professional dogma with more open-ended attitudes. This co-existence is not always easy, prompting strains on the work-loads of staff¹³³ and demanding delicate balances to be negotiated between ideals of ethical citizenship, the demands of professional roles and firmly-held lines of belief.

Secondly, Compassion's emphasis on one-to-one relationships intersects productively with multiple senses of community, such that individual sponsors feel 'part of something bigger'. On Compassion Sunday, for instance, imaginaries of global poverty intertwine with moral geographies of personal and corporate responsibility, and senses of local church community interweave with imaginaries of global Christian family (Bornstein, 2001). The drawing together and internalisation of these different spatialities in-place, in-relation, through familiar faces and performances, provides a complex spatial vehicle through which religion and charity are inseparably made. This occurs through the definition and cohering of multiple co-productive collectivities, including the local church (itself produced partially through informal networks of care), the coming-together of many churches to support Compassion, and the global body of Christ, combating the aches and pains of poverty through the generous movements of its healthier limbs. Marking out of 'the community of the faithful' (Howe, 2009) would therefore seem a complex process that locates collective identity multiply in the nexus of different spatial imaginaries and senses of scale. Compassion Sunday delineates one attempt to strategically manage this nexus in ways that prompt giving responses, entangling sponsorship meaningfully with authoritative moral influences in a context where hearts and minds are (in theory) predisposed to care about and through charity (demonstrating clearly why churches are considered by IDNGOs to be such vital promotional spaces).

¹³³ At HQ, for instance, staff members often volunteer considerable amounts of unpaid overtime, or voluntarily write letters on behalf of sponsors who cannot.

Lastly, Compassion's emphasis on one-to-one relationships forms a strategic attempt to strengthen the commitments of sponsors to sponsored children, and thence to sponsorship and Compassion. Similarly, it underpins ventures like OurCompassion and church partnerships, which work to multiply relations between sponsors, infilling Compassion's networks with a complex mesh of interwoven relations. These latter schemes depart from traditional efforts to encourage supporters to further 'get involved' by giving more, or persuading other people to give more (see 5.3.3). Instead, these schemes seemingly encourage different forms of engagement, predicated on agendas such as cross-cultural dialogue, education and faith-based friendship. Their infancy means that normative pronouncements are at present difficult to make, however it is clear that there is more going on here (or at least the potential for more) than bland neoliberal frameworks of service delivery charity, or even endorsements to global citizenship.

In sum, Compassion's fidelity to an ideology of 'personal relationship' seemingly forms an impressive, multi-layer strategy through which Compassion invests in corporate branding, overcomes negative connotations surrounding its large size and professionalised appearance, and adds ideological weight to its sponsorship scheme. Whilst these strategies do not always work out as planned, they seem to form both a powerful marketing framework and a potential vehicle through which productive dialogue might be fostered. The paradoxical mobilisation of 'relationship' as a simplistic, agenda-full discursive device alongside its propensity to encourage open-ended ethics of welcome and going-beyond, seem a particularly productive set of fractures out of which the latter might emerge. It certainly challenges fixed, singular associations which surround designations of 'evangelical', 'Christian' and 'neoliberal'.

7.5.4 Section conclusions: more-than-charitable space

Compassion's networks comprise complex assemblages of the social, material, affective and spiritual, intertwining to co-produce a mesh of caring flows, different types of friendship and giving, belief and identity, many of which contrast Compassion's professionalised, corporate facade. They dwell in the performative dynamics of individual embodied encounters as much as in 'official' policy and discourse, meaning that important questions surround how

these elements of charitable space weave together and interact, rather than being left to assumptions about top-down absolute power or the necessary stability of official hierarchies. There is an important politics bubbling around Compassion's size, ethos, positioning and discourses, which hang together far from neatly.

Furthermore, the various politics surrounding Compassion's targeting of individual churches demonstrates the extent to which Compassion is reliant on these heterogeneous spaces functioning in a certain way in order for its charitable agendas to flourish. Compassion's strategies are built around the permanency of church buildings, for instance, the welcome of church leadership, the absence of other established charitable presences and the openness of the congregation (none of which are guaranteed); as much as the willingness of its volunteers and the potency of its promotions. Instead of being subject completely to top-down, managerial governance, therefore, Compassion's networks are complex and contingent, and spill beyond top-down control.

Though its attempts at ideological and hierarchical coherence are admirable, therefore, the potential for gaps, fragmentations and disconnections nonetheless seem greater here than in Kindu and Grassroots, where staff hierarchies, organisational policies and discourses, evangelism and informal networking all play out through the embodied practices of a handful of people. Whilst Compassion's networking processes seem to align partially with Grassroots, Kindu and Plan, therefore, they are also configured with its own specific set of dynamics and politics. So far, this has been very productive regarding its charitable agendas; however, the increasing strains both within Compassion and within the spaces and communities it seeks to co-constitute (e.g. 5.5.3) suggest that the very incoherencies and paradoxes which have fuelled its growth may well, as in previous case studies, also contain the seeds of its degeneration and destabilisation.

7.6: Conclusions: rethinking charitable space

This chapter has been purposefully fragmentary, telling different stories about four diverse IDNGOs in order to more fully grasp the relational complexity through which their spaces form and hold together, rather than assuming that they all evolve along some pre-given linear model. I would like here to draw these case studies together around a more sustained discussion of charitable space, in order to think about what a relational approach might offer geographical understandings of this phenomenon. I begin by reflecting on the conceptual benefits of relational thinking, before drawing the case studies around some cross-cutting themes. I then use these themes as spring-boards from which to reflect on charitable space more generally.

7.6.1 Networks, networking processes and networked relations

Casting charitable space in terms of networks, networking processes and networked relations may only be a first step; nevertheless it productively allows for the complexity of charitable space to be more incisively grasped. It allows for a sustained recognition of the wealth of 'stuff' which co-produces charity, the embodied encounters, materials, practices and social micro-dynamics; highlighting its fluid, leaky boundaries and the other relational contexts which dance around and through its spaces. Compassion cannot be understood apart from evangelical Christian discourses and local churches; Kindu cannot be understood apart from the Ethiopian tourist industry; the 'global' trajectories of development charity assemble in dialogic relation to localised spaces of letter-writing meetings, knitting circles and school assemblies (and so on).

Conversely, a relational approach also allows for the acknowledgement of charitable space as itself productive of far more than just 'charity' in its formal, traditional sense, intertwining with myriad other landscapes of identity and community (including self, family, church, school, social group, and broader imaginaries of humanity or Christian family). It also allows for a processual handle to be gained on how charitable space assembles; its mass of component parts ordered to certain productive ends whilst remaining dynamically fluid and provisional. Besides the various ordering processes outlined in this chapter, additionally important (though stressed less to make room for other details) is the durability of child sponsorship itself as a stabilising mechanism, displaying a clear propensity to entice and ensure the long-term

commitment of supporters (see chapter 6). In all, a relational approach allows for a delicate, always-partial grasp of the processes and relations, the dynamic semblances of order(ing) and disorder(ing), through which charitable space hangs together, whilst retaining its heterogeneity.

As such, it makes possible a more nuanced account of the politics of charitable space, including the ways in which it is ordered and its boundaries performed in ways which include some and exclude others. It centralises questions, for instance, such as how charity becomes ordered around certain configurations of gender and familial relation, certain social classes and cultural frameworks, and not others; how organisations with certain religious adherences (or refutations) welcome donors or recipients with differing beliefs; and how those with more critical views are afforded access into the charity process and/or allowed to speak back to it (or, as with the Sharps, pushed away from it). The dynamic tensions between 'brothering' and 'othering' (Samson, 2002) are here performed multiply, exceeding the gift relation between giver and recipient.

These insights emphasise that charitable space deserves to be read through more than just IDNGO promotions (an understandably popular entry point for much existing social scientific work on charity) and ethos statements; though these are important, taken alone they fail to adequately open up the various networked existences and dynamics of IDNGOs. Grassroots and Compassion, for instance, show that faith-based charitable performances are irreducible to organisational statements of belief or ethos, and are not always ethically singular or consistent. Before labels such as 'evangelistic' or 'postsecular' can be bandied about connotatively, therefore, it is important to interrogate the 'hows' and 'whys' of faith-based charitable behaviour. This suggests a broader relevance of the tools of relational (particularly assemblage) thinking to work on faith and the postsecular (see also Holloway, 2012), theorising the intersections between faith and charity in a more multiple, dynamic way which allows for postsecular positions to form in dialogic relation to more traditional, dogmatic frameworks, rather than these different positions forming binary opposites.

Questions are then prompted about how these negotiations work out within particular spaces of charitable performance (e.g. how Compassion's complex configurations of evangelicalism and postsecular welcome are performed at particular Christian events, or in letter-writing sessions), how they form dispositions which can be traced through different spatial associations (Holloway, 2012), as well as how they intersect with the various opportunities and constraints coursing through organisational networks (e.g. at Compassion, these include the various circumscribing influences of neoliberal corporatism and organisational bureaucracy). These complications would suggest a broader need to complicate notions of the postsecular, challenging the assumption that it necessarily always works out in the same way. What look like postsecular 'crossovers' may in practice be fragmented, multiple and inconsistent. Relational thinking therefore allows for multiple realities of faith-based charity to exist, even within the same IDNGOs, the same people or relations- certainly multiple ways in which 'official' faith bases are negotiated and performed.

In all, rather than seeking to produce a coherent, generalising theory, scholarly exploration becomes about producing incisive-yet-open accounts which move away from simplistic assumptions of linear, autonomous giving engagements, whilst also seeking to grasp how order nonetheless emerges and endures. As far as charity goes, this is about not taking sweeping statements about its ethics, politics and spatialities at face value, but about teasing apart the intricacies of the organisations and individuals doing the work, and how they relate dialogically to broader discourses (cf. being subsumed by them). That said, this does not mean that charity is too complex for anything useful to be said about it. Indeed, I now draw out some important cross-cutting thematics, emergent from the four case studies, through which some more general insights about charitable space can be crystallised and thought through.

7.6.2 Cross-cutting themes

This chapter has allowed various types of networking process and relation to surface which appear to cross-cut all four IDNGOs, despite (and even because of) their evident diversity. Here I draw these into three thematic strands, which can be conceived of as key component parts of the production

and extension of charitable networks, functioning alongside others that are better known and understood, like empathy-inducing appeals.

The first strand is that of evangelism. Whilst this involves all discursive opportunities IDNGOs take to promote their work, this chapter has particularly highlighted the importance of the charismatic inspiration of key individuals. This might happen through purposeful work to spread the word about child sponsorship, or through the organic, magnetic pull of particular personas and characters. It might, as with Compassion, be formally recognised and encouraged by the IDNGO or, as with Plan, be acknowledged but not invested in with much formality. Or, as with Kindu and Grassroots, the central evangelistic figures might be senior staff, whose public approachability and accessibility form an important part of the organisation's appeal and grounds for legitimacy. Evangelistic activity is therefore a vital way in which charitable networks are extended and strengthened. However, the negative connotations surrounding religious evangelism (despite their problematic simplicity) also remind that evangelistic activity of any kind should not be romanticised, and that demanding change from others does not always produce desired or 'positive' results. This sort of activity, therefore, can also prompt angst, tension, difficulty and relational breakdown (see particularly Compassion discussion), and cannot be treated without due attention to its politics.

The second theme is that of friendship, and more broadly the muddying of staff-donor relations with less formalised interactions and engagements, forming a stronger, more diverse set of relations than traditional neoliberal staff-donor frames. Whilst this is more clearly prevalent within the networks of Grassroots and the Kindu Trust, where the befriending efforts of senior staff form central ways in which support is established and more space seemingly exists for outside-the-box engagements, it is also apparent in modified form within the networks of Plan and Compassion. The latter two IDNGOs are circumscribed somewhat by their size and professionalism; nevertheless, they have still sought to cultivate personable, informal staff-donor relations, albeit in other ways: through networks of volunteers, particular ethics applied to staff practices, discursive tactics, and negotiations with other, less formalised charitable efforts. Here there emerge some particularly interesting interactions, as the push to formally regulate the charity process intersects multiply with

different types of engagement being sought by supporters (e.g. see the Sharps, 7.4).

Thirdly, the case studies all demonstrate the enduring importance of proximal encounter to the extension and strengthening of charity networks. The nature and content of these encounters vary widely, including physical proximities to projects and recipients (e.g. on Grassroots trips), encounters with evangelistic individuals (who may be senior staff, but who may also be friends and family), and the imaginary senses of proximity derived from celebrity IDNGO endorsement. They also involve such spaces of charitable performance and interaction as letter-writing groups or events like Compassion Sunday, in which multiple relational micro-dynamics co-mingle (e.g. friendship, inspiration, feelings of inferiority, particular evangelical agendas) to form complex, political local expressions of broader configurations of charity, generosity and belief. Such senses of proximal encounter multiply supporter identifications with giving, muddying the idea of child sponsorship as care 'at a distance' (see also 3.2.5). Instead of being composed of a linear relation of difference overcome by pity, compassion, solidarity or some other form of ethical identification, via various material flows and structural mechanisms; charity becomes composed of many relations and types of care, physically both distant and proximal, each of which house various fluid senses of closeness and farness. This once again challenges spatially simplistic accounts of the charity process, highlighting the other significant bodies, spaces, types of encounter and architectures of responsibility which co-constitute this¹³⁴.

These three themes crop up *differently* across the four IDNGOs, being configured, facilitated and constrained by each organisation's networked dynamics and environments. I am not, therefore, proclaiming them as singular, nor as pre-given. Furthermore, I am not arguing here that these themes are necessarily common to all IDNGOs. Instead, I simply suggest that it is interesting that, across four such diverse organisations, these lines of similarity are nonetheless apparent. This may (somewhat paradoxically) be a *product* of

¹³⁴ These spatial complexities layer onto multiple senses of distance and closeness already fostered by child sponsorship itself, from the gaps emphasised by poverty/wealth distinctions, and by imaginaries of the Global South as 'out there' somewhere far away; to the closeness emphasised by comparisons made to more familiar [Westernised] notions of childhood, and by the felt connection of correspondence.

their diversity; Compassion, for instance, may well validate face-to-face interaction and friendly evangelistic advocacy because of a felt disparity between its large-scale, professionalised setup and the benefits smaller IDNGOs 'naturally' enjoy because of their more accessible, informal position. Retaining this sense of heterogeneity and attention to its complex, often tangled relation with order (see Allen, 2011), then, I now use the above themes as starting points from which to reflect more broadly on charitable space.

7.6.3 Taking these themes forward: reflections on charitable space

Whilst they are not intended to be exhaustive or forcibly separate, the three themes identified above provide useful platforms from which to reflect on charitable space. The thematic of evangelism highlights the importance of individual people to charitable networks, extending and establishing organisational agendas with dynamism and creativity, imbuing charitable space with political negotiation, and performatively delineating the kinds of welcome or boundary-drawing upon which it becomes predicated. This challenges accounts of charity which excise the individual, speaking only of discourse or abstract dictatorial forces (e.g. the neoliberal, the colonial). It also challenges accounts of charity which privilege the individualistic responses of supporters, whether through colonial forms of empathy or through frameworks of neoliberal citizenship, valorising instead the many others who also motivate, shape and constitute charitable action.

Importantly, this is not to speak of human agency as an inherent quality belonging to these individuals; rather it is a relational effect co-configured by a wealth of contextual relations and components (e.g. Hetherington and Law, 2000). Evangelists like Hugo and Sharon Anson, Kate Eshete, Hugh and Catherine Sharp and the Compassion advocates are situated inseparably in relation to particular materials (e.g. Bibles, aeroplanes, computers, Powerpoint presentations, letters), social fabrics (e.g. schools, tourism agencies, churches, families), discourses and so on, endowing them with particular capabilities which other network members do not enjoy in the same ways. The examples in this chapter also highlight the potential of evangelistic efforts to have diverse, unanticipated impacts, identifying points at which even the most stable, immutable-seeming people break down, fail or are changed, or witness their

efforts prompting surprising outcomes. To highlight the importance of evangelism to charitable space is not to uncritically reify the human or to valorise evangelistic activity as either singular or linear, but instead to recast these actors and types of action in a more open-ended, multiple way, that acknowledges their embeddedness in a performative world (Anderson and Harrison, 2010).

Secondly, the thematic of friendship highlights the propensity of roles and relations seemingly central to the charity process (i.e. staff and donors) to exceed the parameters with which they are commonly apprehended, being shaped invariably by network dynamics and characteristics, and by diverse interplays between these and the broader dictates of charity law or [neoliberal] trends within Third Sector/international development governance. Even in a neoliberal age, then, space exists within the four IDNGOs discussed in this chapter (despite their varying fidelities and vulnerabilities to neoliberal trends) for charitable engagements which do not conform to a pre-set framework. Obviously the ethical and political prospects of such space vary with context; perhaps the least that can be said is that flows of friendship and less formalised, less structured engagements, particularly if sustained by staff ethics of open welcome, seemingly offer more space for critical dialogue than do the more prescriptive relations propounded by neoliberal structures and values. Again, this is not to say that such informal ways of relating always work out 'positively', nor is it to deny their political dynamics. However, it is to draw a substantial distinction between their potentialities and those made possible within neoliberal frames, thereby providing cause for hope.

Finally, the thematic of proximal encounters emphasises the importance (as do the previous two themes) of a vast array of embodied, visceral sensibilities and dimensions of interaction not usually associated with charitable action. It also, as suggested previously, further highlights the spatial complexity of child sponsorship and its reliance on multiple interrelating senses of distance and closeness. Importantly, as a result, the architectures of responsibility and care which emerge here cannot be pigeon-holed: this is not a simplistic case of distance and difference being linearly overcome via classic notions of colonial pity or patronage, the cosmopolitan outreaches of global citizenship, or religious notions of evangelistic duty. Instead, charity is co-constituted by multiple, fluid

gives and takes, different flows of caring relation, effort and attachment. A spatially simplistic view which boils charitable activity down to a certain type of responsibility or care, or a certain world-view, is therefore not helpful here. Whilst some types of caring motivation and framework are often more prevalent than others (e.g. notions of parental responsibility, religious pushes to action), there is immense fluidity and multiplicity here which centralises the intricate working details of people's everyday lives and environments rather than some set of pre-given theoretical frameworks. A relational approach allows such complexities to be opened up and acknowledged more purposefully.

These insights provide a prudent departure point from which to reflect more directly on the thematic of faith outlined in chapters 1 and 3, including its relation to the secular. Indeed, I have been surprised throughout this research at the muddy ethical complexity of all organisations doing child sponsorship, such that any concrete 'distinctiveness' (whether faith-based or secular) is impossible to grasp firmly. Even bold declarations of religious (dis)affiliation in ethos statements may in practice bear out in complex, fluid, contradictory ways. It would seem that in practice, the relational complexities of charitable space preclude the delineation of easy ethical categories of charitable thought, inspiration and action. That said, however, I would like to draw a firmer distinction between staff members and donors who attend purposefully and directly to spiritual dimensions of knowledge and experience as part of their charitable activities, and those for whom faith forms a backdrop set of inspirations and ethical guidelines. For the former (Grassroots staff provide an obvious example with their attentiveness to the prophetic), faith is a dynamic, dialogic relationship with God's living agency, such that practices of 'alternative discernment' (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012) saturate daily life and professional activity. Being a relational product that is 'worked out' in day-to-day practice, this is definitively *not* a clear-cut distinction, and will not always conform easily to organisational boundaries. Neither will it necessarily signal differences in belief, but rather differences in the practical interweaving of belief with embodied praxis, knowledge and response. It is therefore an observation that requires continued attentiveness to the dynamism and inconsistencies of lived experience.

In sum, these three thematics exemplify how relational approaches allow charitable space to be thought in ways which exceed traditional accounts (see chapters 2 and 3). This provides fodder for a spatially more complex approach which remains open regarding how charitable space might be multiply, processually constituted, and highlights the validity of relational approaches to space for building more nuanced accounts of charitable agency/structure, and of power. Building on their insights, the next and final chapter revisits the research questions identified at the end of chapter 1 in order to map out the key contributions of this thesis to geographical understandings of charity, and to suggest ways forward for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1 Overview: research intent and thesis structure

In light of a dearth of coherent, sustained geographical research into landscapes of charity, this study has used an empirical investigation of child sponsorship schemes to explore certain aspects of these landscapes in more depth. It has drawn together disparate, fragmentary strands of literature around the theme of charity to more coherently, concretely delineate a set of geographical understandings, approaches and sensibilities to the topic. These strands include existing geographical work on 'ethical' action (e.g. voluntarism, ethical consumption, environmental conservation), to which my work on charitable giving adds another empirical dimension. I have privileged a particular focus on faith-based giving throughout the research, in recognition that religious faith forms an enduringly important political and poetical (Kong, 2001) force structuring contemporary charitable action and organisation, and that considerable empirical scope exists for exploring their interconnections.

Within these broader emphases, I have attended critically to narratives and assumptions with which notions of charity and giving are commonly apprehended in both public and academic domains, assessing their merit and (where appropriate) suggesting more nuanced ways in which charity might be approached and thought. Empirically, I have engaged particularly with two sites of the charity process: organisations (in this case international development NGOs) and donors (in this case child sponsors), exploring how these entities and their (inter)relations are performed into being, whilst remaining open to the many other spaces and socialities which dialogically co-constitute them. Child sponsorship has provided a particularly interesting way into discussions of charity and charitable space, representing an enduringly popular form of giving which at once references long-standing colonial imaginaries and power relations, and yet is also manifesting a wealth of tensions and difficulties more recently emergent within the UK's Third Sector and 'international development'.

To analytically tether and guide this [often unruly] set of research interests, I delineated six research questions at the end of chapter 1, under the three thematics of space, ethics and politics. These were as follows:

- SPACE
 1. What kinds of spaces and relations, dynamics of distance and proximity, co-constitute child sponsorship?
 2. How might charitable space be re-theorised to account for these complexities, and how does this impact understandings of charitable care 'at a distance'?
- ETHICS
 3. What kinds of ethical relations, resources and imaginaries co-constitute giving prompts, practices and performances, and how do these co-configure the ethical dynamics of the gift relation? Thus, are the negative ethical allegations commonly levelled at charity deserved?
 4. Is it possible to distinguish ethics unique to faith-based giving, separable from other ethical prompts and resources?
- POLITICS
 5. What political dynamics co-configure child sponsorship, whether issuing from its key component parts (e.g. IDNGOs, sponsorship schemes, sponsors/sponsor communities) or broader sector trends in governance (e.g. neoliberal)?
 6. How is charitable space produced through the delineation of certain imaginaries of responsibility, belonging and global space, including and excluding certain voices and narratives in the process; *and* how do these get critically negotiated/contested? Thus, what potential does child sponsorship have to found politically inspiring approaches to global inequity and injustice?

Structurally, I have presented the work in three main sections. Firstly, in exploring the site of the organisation (IDNGO), chapter 2 overviewed literature relating to IDNGOs both historical and present, identifying some important narratives and literatures with which they have been understood and critiqued to date. These pertain particularly to notions of colonial complicity, neoliberal co-option and managerial politics. Chapter 5 presented the findings of work with 20 child sponsorship IDNGOs, by way of empirically appraising these narratives and fleshing out a more nuanced understanding of the charitable faces, structures and activities of these organisations.

Secondly, and regarding the site of donation, chapter 3 drew together several disparate strands of literature relating to giving and ethical action, critically appraising and appending several ways in which charitable giving is commonly discussed in both academic and public discourse. These included narratives of altruism, egoism and ‘moral selving’, social and religious obligation, colonial patronage and notions of neoliberal citizenship and personal responsibility. Chapter 6 then used the findings of work with 57 child sponsors to empirically explore the merits of these arguments, with participants being selected from four particular IDNGOs in order to further explore some important themes which characterise the organisation-donor interface.

Thirdly, chapter 7 drew together this research with geographical work on relationality, developing a new set of geographical perspectives regarding charitable space by exploring how IDNGOs and sponsors interact and ‘hang together’ in charitable assemblages. Through this, I have sought to set existing critiques and narratives in their rightful place, whilst finding ways to comprehend, grapple with and remain open to the complexity of charitable landscapes. The remainder of this discussion presents key findings of the research in relation to the above research questions (8.2), appraising their theoretical implications and contributions (8.3). I then consider some limitations to the study (8.4) and suggest pathways forward for future research (8.5).

8.2 Research findings

SPACE

1. What kinds of spaces and relations, dynamics of distance and proximity, co-constitute child sponsorship?

Since both sponsors and IDNGOs are situated, relational phenomena, child sponsorship is invariably done in ways which dialogically intertwine with their diverse, complex relational contexts. Charity is not done in a vacuum, but is intrinsically, messily, dynamically social (and material, and emotional, and so on), co-constituting far more than the traditional ‘gift relation’ of sponsor and sponsored child. Indeed, the flows of the gift relation are unavoidably experienced and made meaningful through a mesh of other relations, senses of

place, closeness and farness, and are put to work in myriad ways co-producing these socio-spatial fabrics, affirming various moral sensibilities and communal apparatuses in the process.

This research has particularly emphasised the importance of the everyday, with charitable action and organisation co-producing such communal entities as schools, churches, families and friendships, and becoming a vital way in which moral and spiritual bodies are performatively produced and governed (though not always an easy, even way). As such, this research has also emphasised that charitable space is assembled through multiple, interrelating relational and discursive configurations, which together both embed and blur senses of charitable scale. These include bodily spaces of charitable feeling and praxis (including non-representational realms of sensation and knowing), 'local' expressions of collective charitable action (e.g. letter-writing groups, knitting circles, church congregations, school classes) and 'global' apprehensions of the body of Christ, the family of humanity, etc. Charitable space and its senses of moral being and becoming are co-constructed in letter-writing meetings, Sunday services and school assemblies as much as in the promotional discourses of IDNGOs (though, of course, these all overlap and intertwine). None of these are devoid of politics, since all delineate and embed particular moral worlds.

Given these insights, it becomes impossible to apprehend charity adequately using only global frames of North-South relation, or linear, singular accounts of giving engagements across distance. Child sponsorship is done in-place, in-relation and (very often) in-community, rather than being composed purely of individualistic, private ethical practices and choices. Traditional charitable architectures of care 'at a distance' and supposedly linear gift relationships are routed through multiple, fluid caring associations, reassembling charity out of complex interrelations of distance and proximity. It is through these spatial tangles, knots and braids, at the same time as through the more easily digestible narrations of IDNGO discourse, that otherness is engaged with, whether this involves taming it into something accessible and consumable, or rendering it inaccessible and unknowable; or finding more productive ways to engage on the other's terms, taking seriously their propensity to challenge, and allowing them to speak (/write) back...or not. It also

becomes impossible to apprehend charity adequately using neoliberal frames of 'donors' and 'staff'; this research has consistently blurred and challenged the roles and relations these framings assign. Whilst they are not devoid of meaning, it becomes vital to examine how they are produced in ways which both order/erase and depend upon more complex narrations of expertise and more fluid modes of relation.

2. How might charitable space be re-theorised to account for these complexities, and how does this impact understandings of charitable care 'at a distance'?

In order to more incisively grasp these multiplicities and complexities, I have sought to recast charitable space in terms of networks, networking processes and relations. Theory surrounding relational space, particularly that which mobilises vocabularies of 'networks' and 'assemblages', helpfully allows the heterogeneous parts and relations which make up charitable space to be accounted for, and for attention to be given to how they hang together and become ordered, configuring ethical action. Thus, it allows charitable space to be theorised without recourse to simplistic, generalising narratives, and without presumption regarding its spatial forms and flows. Such a perspective also allows ways of relating to come to the fore which are as yet both undervalued and under-researched within academic work on charity: this research has particularly emphasised evangelistic behaviour of varying kinds, friendship and befriending efforts, and proximal encounters.

Thus, instead of being apprehended purely as care 'at a distance', with distance being tamed and overcome by letter-writing and 'personal relationships' between sponsors and sponsored children, or by global ideological moves regarding poverty or religion, child sponsorship is able to be newly appreciated as composed of more complex spatial dynamics and interactions. Particularly, its distal elements are often made accessible, and its 'proximal' elements (e.g. dialogue) understood, by being routed through everyday, familiar interactions and sensings, in ways which carry the propensity to both affirm and challenge problematic attitudes to otherness, and which imbue charitable action with articulations of meaning not scripted into the sponsorship device.

ETHICS

3. What kinds of ethical relations, resources and imaginaries co-constitute giving prompts, practices and performances, and how do these configure the ethical dynamics of the gift relation? Thus, are the negative allegations commonly levelled at charity deserved?

Sponsors and IDNGO staff bring a wealth of diverse ethical resources and frameworks into charitable praxis, suggesting once again the importance of their own social settings and identities to giving ethics. Affirming the arguments of Cloke et al (2007) regarding volunteering praxis, child sponsorship seems to provide a device which prompts and facilitates the translation of everyday, 'ordinary' ethics such as friendship, familial love and care into a less ordinary context, in ways which are thoroughly wrapped up with the specificities of donor lives and situations. As such, its distal extension of charity is often interpreted and experienced, at least in part, through more proximal relational lenses and fidelities (e.g. sponsored children becoming understood as 'extended family', or sponsorship being integrated with attempts to bring up one's own children). This can contribute to charity becoming the dispositional stuff of ordinary life, settling mundanely into ordinary life rhythms and spaces. However, the intersections between the ethical demands of child sponsorship and the 'ordinarily ethical' contexts of sponsors are many and complex, and can also prompt passionate, costly, thought-full responses from givers. It would therefore appear that the relationship between 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' ethical activity cannot be easily assumed, nor can the 'ordinary' contexts of sponsors necessarily be passed over quickly as too banal to be useful for broader citizenship projects.

The ethical dynamics of giving are not only produced through 'ordinary' carescapes and relationships, but also interweave with more broadly circulated discourses, such as those promoted in IDNGO advertisements. The spaces of individual giving praxis therefore become vital loci for the production and intersection of multiple ethical flows, concerns and discourses, for their juxtaposition and their juggling alongside and through each other. This happens with the least disruption and discomfort when the ethical positions of both sponsors and staff conform uncritically to stereotypical narratives of patronage,

do-gooderism and proselytism (religious, cultural, etc), as they sometimes do, reflecting and complementing the overwhelming characterisation of IDNGO appeals by both overt and subtle stereotypes of need and evocative appeals to personal responsibility. For such individuals, these uncritical stances are largely dispositional, rather than being purposefully, thoughtfully adopted. Within IDNGO appeals, these discourses represent more complex configurations of strategy, positioning and contradictory organisational attempts to negotiate multiple tasks and ethical concerns.

Such discourses are also routed through and intertwined (often purposefully) with a variety of other moral communities and sources of authority, co-producing multiple other formulations of ethical place and belonging (e.g. family, church, school), their ethical configurations often becoming multiply re-affirmed and their norms restated. There could be space here for the disruption of such circulations and for the collective pursuit of less simplistic articulations of ethical global imaginary (e.g. that emphasise interdependence). However, at present this is not occurring on a large scale, or with any degree of purpose or system. Furthermore, given the layers of management and governance imposed upon sponsor-child communication, it would seem that the sponsor-child 'relationship' is rarely allowed space to move beyond the bounds of institutional discourse and strategy, or to grow in ways which contest prevailing ethico-spatial frameworks. Instead, otherness is seemingly subsumed into a certain packaged form, which complements and reinforces both the sponsorship device and the efforts of sponsors, rather than being allowed to speak and be heard on its own terms, circumscribing the potential of the dialogue.

However, all is not lost, for alternative strands of more critical, creative thought and engagement are also present. In IDNGOs, there are particular engines of change (e.g. broader pressures, key individuals) which could become loci for the development of alternative approaches to sponsorship which foster deeper dialogue and self-reflexivity. Amongst sponsors, strains of critical thought and negotiation are frequently present (though rarely in coherent form), and applied to giving praxis in dynamic ways. There are also frequent examples of sponsors rejecting formulations of charity that emphasise personal gain and consumer satisfaction, directly contrasting current trends in IDNGO fundraising praxis. Across the board, stereotypical narrations of

expertise, responsibility and the power to save are often contested and re-interpreted in ways which 'go beyond' neoliberal frameworks of consumer expectation. Whilst at present these movements are rarely translated coherently into scheme structure or top-down organisational policy, their common predication on ethics of open welcome and critical self-disruption seemingly provide productive starting points from which to put sponsor engagements and the sponsor-child 'relationship' to work in more inspiring ways.

4. Is it possible to distinguish ethics unique to faith-based giving, separable from other ethical prompts and resources?

Religious faith provides an important set of inspirations and configuring ethics which frame many organisational and individual encounters with charity. Focusing particularly on Christian approaches to giving, this study has shown that child sponsorship provides an important, increasingly dominant way in which Christian identities (both individual and communal) are being performed and negotiated in the contemporary era, though this is not always a simple process devoid of critical reflection. Furthermore, both theological and spiritual sensibilities are continually significant to everyday understandings and experiences of charity (often beyond the realms of officially 'faith-based' charitable action), and are empirically vital to explore as key ways in which charity is practised and made meaningful. This research suggests that faith inspirations and ethics are not able to be pinned down to some set of 'distinctive' approaches, but rather take a huge variety of fluid, complex forms, ranging from uncritical fundamentalism to postsecular 'rapprochement' (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012), blurring with 'the secular' at almost every opportunity and often cropping up in informal ways and in surprising places.

Nevertheless, I have noted an empirical distinction between mobilisations of faith which interweave a dynamic attentiveness to spiritual landscapes with everyday activities, and more 'background' mobilisations of faith-as-inspiration or ethical guidelines (see section 7.6.3). I have also noted a tendency for self-criticality to be more present within Christian respondents than those who deny a religious affiliation. Where such self-criticality is present, it is also possible to highlight theological inversions of prevailing power relations (e.g. visible in notions of humility and servanthood, or loving in response to God's original love

approach), and theo-ethics of unconditional love, mercy, grace and caritas, which provide ready resources for guiding the practical application of critical perspectives in ways which do not settle for nihilism or paralysis. Academically, the body of work known as postcolonial theology also attests very positively to these possibilities.

What therefore becomes important is how faith is blended with lines of critique, and how it is allowed to become a vehicle for critical self-reflection. As my reflections in chapter 1 hopefully show, this blending should not occur in an introverted, self-congratulatory way, nor should it be mindlessly deconstructive, but rather should constructively allow assumptions to be opened up and deliberately re-thought, the stabilities of belief anchoring (though not prescribing) the instabilities of critical exploration, so that the rich resources of theo-ethics might be acknowledged and put to work in positive ways. Thus, my own experiences do not become embarrassing or merely decorative, but become a foundation from which I might productively synthesise global issues with my own being-in the world. The nascent body of work combining postsecularity with postcoloniality might provide productive theoretical space for negotiating this territory.

POLITICS

5. What kinds of political dynamics co-configure child sponsorship, whether regarding its key component parts (e.g. IDNGOs, sponsorship schemes, sponsors/sponsor communities) or broader sector trends in governance (e.g. neoliberal)?

Broadly, the political dynamics which co-configure child sponsorship can be broken down into three groups. Firstly, there are those emanating from broader sector trends and discourses. This research has affirmed the growing influence of neoliberal values and frameworks of governance within the organisational spaces of child sponsorship, and the configuration of these spaces through a particular cocktail of organisational agendas and imperatives, suggesting that broader narratives of neoliberalisation and existing insights into the managerial characteristics of IDNGOs have continued salience. Further, the

research has shown that child sponsorship schemes conform largely to broader representational politics of development aid which depoliticise charity, representing it as a matter of ethics and care but not politics or justice. However, this research has also strongly emphasised the *diverse* ways in which these configuring influences play out within organisational space. IDNGOs are diversely situated regarding external pressures and trends, not least due to parameters such as organisational epistemology, size, positioning and ethos. A key contribution of this thesis has therefore been to valorise the specific situations of each IDNGO as important to discussions of 'broader' Third Sector/international development trends, interweaving with and re-constituting these trends in complex, often contested ways.

Secondly, within these broader trends, there are specific political dynamics which characterise the landscapes of child sponsorship. These include landscapes of faith-based IDNGO competition and the particular negotiations these are currently incurring both within and between IDNGOs. They also include the politics of representation which surrounds sponsorship schemes and their internal dynamics (for instance, the negotiations which surround 'indirect' sponsorship schemes and their public representation in ways which still evoke the traditional tenets of child sponsorship), and the ways in which these issues are performatively negotiated in individual encounters between staff and sponsors, as well as through IDNGO appeals. Furthermore, and similarly, they include the dynamics of evangelical modes of thought, speech and praxis (whether religious or to do with extolling sponsorship), and their varied reception. How these specific political dynamics are performed and negotiated within the spaces of child sponsorship are as important to consider in the configuration of charitable space as 'broader' trends.

Thirdly, there are the many other structures of authority and flows of power which also co-configure the landscape of child sponsorship, whether these involve parental relationships in sponsor families or the similar relations of educational and moral investment which characterise teacher/class relations in schools; hierarchies of church leadership, various IDNGO attempts to govern sponsor engagements, the micro-dynamics of individual encounters (e.g. internal dynamics of letter-writing groups, etc), or engagements with God and Scripture. Sometimes these political landscapes serve to reinforce the

governing strategies and discourses of IDNGOs, or underscore particular charitable imaginaries; but sometimes they also contest, disrupt and re-read them. In all, this research has shown charity to be an intensely, multiply political phenomenon, in many ways which have not been thoroughly acknowledged by existing literature. This has particular ramifications for narratives of charitable space which privilege North-South imaginaries of power, highlighting instead more complex relational flows through which (undoubtedly) global inequalities are affirmed and embedded, but through which they might also be contested and complicated; and suggesting myriad other power relations and architectures dialogically present within charitable space.

6. How is charitable space produced through the delineation of certain imaginaries of responsibility, belonging and global space, including and excluding certain voices and narratives in the process, and how do these get critically negotiated/contested? Thus, what potential does child sponsorship have to found politically inspiring approaches to global inequity and injustice?

This research has shown that in many ways, child sponsorship is particularly evocative of neoliberal imaginaries of responsibility and articulations of responsible subject formation. That is, it provides a device through which autonomous, conscientious individuals are mobilised to take responsible action towards global-scale senses of poverty and injustice, performing romanticised ideals of 'global citizenship' whilst governing particular senses of self and self-fulfilment. Child sponsorship, like Fair Trade and other such devices, brings global poverty and anti-poverty action into local scales of citizenly performance-into houses, schools, churches and hearts –in an accessible, emotive way often predicated on sponsor choice, underpinning neoliberal rationalities of active, reflexive, consumer-citizenship. In the process, it is organised, promoted and done in ways which frequently mobilise stereotypical narrations of Western benevolence, expertise and power to save, and romanticise notions of personal connection, precluding real dialogue and (un)learning.

However, this research has shown that, also in a similar vein to ethical consumption devices (e.g. Barnett et al, 2005; Adams and Raisborough, 2010), sponsoring a child is not always as private and as individualistic as it seems. It often intersects with multiple spatially complex senses of community and

belonging, configuring ethical expression more according to what Micheletti (2003) has termed 'individualised collective action' (see also Clarke et al, 2007) by intertwining it with multiple other networks of moral authority, caring interrelation and ethical vision. The opportunities here for turning such communal expressions towards more promising collective movements towards social justice and democratic dialogue would seem to be many. Furthermore, this research has also problematised narrations of giving as purely self-orientated, and as necessarily romantically enjoyable and self-fulfilling, highlighting many instances where sponsors perform charity in self-sacrificial, self-critical ways which contest prevailing neoliberal ethical orthodoxies. Finally, it has persistently disrupted and challenged the tendency to group IDNGOs together as hegemonically, consistently neoliberal in their extension of citizenship opportunities to Northern constituents. Instead, the individual settings of each IDNGO are shown to make a huge difference to the ways in which these trends play out, with some organisations encouraging modes of encounter and relation which contest long-standing hegemonies and make room for other ways of thinking. Here, the vocabularies and theoretical insights of network and assemblage thinking allow for such intricacies to be explored in depth.

At this point, it is important to pause and ask whether or not it might be possible, given these complexities, to conceive of child sponsorship as a promising potential mode of political, citizenly expression. Unlike ethical consumption devices, which connect more easily into senses of political agenda through reference to personal complicity and implication in broader consumption-related injustices (Clarke et al, 2007), *charity* is prevailingly presented to Northern constituents as devoid of politics, and as divorced from any sense of Northern complicity or implication (senses of obligation to act must therefore be derived from elsewhere, whether involving God, 'global Christian family', the 'family of man', the empathetic pull of a lonely, suffering child, etc). Thus, scope for its politicisation remains, currently, highly circumscribed. Furthermore, the disruptions and complications described above remain largely the domain of vague, experimental attempts to 'make a difference', rather than sustained, politicised expressions of civic responsibility which disrupt neoliberal/colonial articulations of global space. However, it need not be this

way. There are many ways in which anti-poverty action and the causes to which it attends might be re-cast as political, as issues of (in)justice, of power and of voice. As such, and through theoretical positions which emphasise interconnection, interdependence and being in-common (e.g. Massey, 2004; Popke, 2009; 2010), it must be possible to reclaim charity as a political project- to do ethics in a political register, as it were (cf. Clarke et al, 2007). To this, and to other theoretical implications of this project, I now turn.

8.3. Theoretical implications

This research contributes to a particularly scant literature within geography- that which specifically focuses on the concept of 'charity' (e.g. Bryson et al, 2002). Drawing together a disparate array of relevant work, it offers important disruptions to prevailing ways in which charity is thought, and common concepts with which it is (often off-handedly) apprehended. By emphasising the complexity and diversity of both organised charity and practices of charity donation, and by suggesting some useful conceptual and theoretical resources with which charitable space might be rethought, it has re-laid a more critical foundation for further work. In so doing, it has presented new insights into child sponsorship as a charitable device and experience, including into how it is organised, represented and 'consumed' in the Global North. As such, this research adds to existing literatures dealing with Global North 'development constituency' mobilisation (e.g. Baillie Smith, 2008) and the politics of IDNGO fundraising and management, privileging some particularly under-researched perspectives (e.g. giving practices and experiences, intersections between sponsors and IDNGOs).

Within this, the research presents some particular insights for existing literatures. Firstly, in emphasising the diverse ways in which IDNGOs are situated and relationally co-produced, it corroborates recent work which highlights the diversity and complexity of neoliberalism, rather than its hegemony (e.g. Williams et al, 2012), including in the specific context of 'Third Sector' and 'voluntary' organisations (e.g. Berry and Gabay, 2009; Yarwood, 2011). Rather than representing 'little platoons' of neoliberalism (or, for that matter, colonialism), IDNGOs are shown to dialogically interact with broader

trends and pressures in complex ways, depending on their particular positionings and internal relational dynamics. More broadly, the landscape of IDNGO competition and inter-organisational dialogue is shown to be distinctly uneven, with particular undulations emerging around axes such as organisational size, positioning, epistemology and ethos. Officially faith-based IDNGOs can become vulnerable to distinctive politics (e.g. of competition, of moral debate) within this, though this varies depending on the extent to which they heavily demarcate and defend faith-based boundaries around their fundraising strategies and brand identities. Rather than their politics being purely determined by broader trends (e.g. in governance), therefore, IDNGOs are positioned and equipped differently regarding their environments, and rarely conform to simplistic linear allegations of neoliberalisation.

Secondly, the research offers some new perspectives on charitable giving, exploring its complex social, material and embodied dimensions and emphasising its multiplicity, its embeddedness and its dynamism. Giving becomes repositioned as a relational, spatial vehicle through which multiple identities and relations, moral imaginaries and senses of belonging are brought into being. Giving ethics are re-cast as performatively, practically co-produced (rather than being *a priori*, stable phenomena) and socially and spatially situated, mobilising complex configurations of predisposition, cognition and critical reflection which fundamentally speak from and to the everyday relational contexts of donors. These insights complement existing work on the performativities of voluntary work (e.g. Cloke et al, 2007), and contest assumptions that giving is necessarily autonomous, private, self-orientated, and predicated on simplistic architectures of altruism, obligation, pity, egoism or desires for return. They therefore present a call for normative assessments of the potentials and problems of charitable action to remain attentive to the specificities of giving (and organisational managements thereof) and the particular dynamics and possibilities these introduce to the charity process.

Across the sites of both donors and IDNGOs, this research suggests a more complex picture regarding faith-based charitable action and feeling. It suggests that charitable space is co-constituted by myriad different articulations of faith and belief, which form multiply, fluidly and inconsistently. Thus, 'traditional' forms of evangelicalism, liberal forms of faith predicated on social

action, postsecular 'crossover' positionalities and secularised perspectives are not each able to be assigned neatly to discrete organisations or people, but overlap and interrelate multiply and porously, often within the same bodies and hearts. This research therefore emphasises the importance of recognising the multiplicity of possible 'faith', 'secular' and 'postsecular' realities, and providing space for these diverse realities to crop up in surprising ways, in surprising places (for instance, the kinds of welcome associated with postsecularity have, in this study, been noted within staunchly evangelical IDNGOs, over-spilling easy critiques and prompting questions about the politics interweaving these co-existent positionings).

Given this complexity, it becomes very difficult to speak of the potentials of 'postsecular' modes of collective charitable organisation and action, since such modes of operation cannot at present be noted in sustained, coherent form within the landscapes of child sponsorship. Where they are present, postsecular ethics and formulations of action appear to unfold organically, through micro-negotiations and interactions; rather than being deliberately opened up and invested in, in more sustained, purposeful ways. If indeed the postsecular can be seen as a potential pathway forward for international development charity, providing resources for negotiating its long-standing, persistent ethical and political problems (especially if synthesised with the emphases of postcoloniality), such organic developments represent a difficulty, since collective movements are unlikely to form and gain momentum from fragmentary, incoherent and often unwitting efforts. Yet, these developments may also represent a strength, since they cross-cut a variety of diverse organisations and are grounded in ethics of attentiveness and responsiveness, rather than grand ideological claims. It therefore becomes vital to not take particular faith/secular labels at face value, but to foreground a complex, attentive concern for how configurations of (un)belief become translated into practice and bodily experience. Particularly useful in this task may well be work on the intersections between embodiment and religion (e.g. Holloway, 2003; 2006; Gökarıksel, 2009), though this is less commonly found within current debates on the postsecular (cf. Olson et al, 2012).

The concern, expressed above, for the politico-ethical 'potentials' of charitable action and organisation gestures towards another, broader theoretical

implication of this project: the stressed importance of developing critical perspectives on charitable giving which provide alternatives to the prevailing assumptions and stereotypes regarding charity within (and beyond) academia. Indeed, within professional, public and academic realms, I feel that it is vital to develop discourses about charitable giving which validate it as a potential resource for overcoming long-standing power inequalities and enabling cross-boundary dialogue and (un)learning, as well as a more equitable distribution of wealth. In other words, it is both possible and desirable to redeem 'traditional' charity (particularly schemes like child sponsorship which are predicated on personable interaction and long-term 'relational' engagement) from the narrow territories such as colonial patronage, consumer choice and self-preference to which it has long been resigned, and instead to put it to work creating deeper and more equitable ethical relationships.

In professional terms, this conceivably means moving away from notions of child sponsorship as an easy fund-raiser, where many ethical sacrifices must be made in order to squeeze contemporary development projects into an increasingly ill-fitting (though still powerful) PR framework. Currently, such a predicament may well have its productivities, but is also showing signs of strain, as well as posing many ethical problems. Moves away from this in scheme content would necessarily mean changing the rhetoric with which sponsorship is commonly apprehended and publicised. Instead, sponsorship could be promoted through a more complex appreciation of the agency, relationality and politics of non-Western childhoods, and a rejection of individualistic tropes of parental patronage and responsibility regarding the subjective positions of sponsors and IDNGO staff. How such changes would unfold would depend greatly on each IDNGO, and how they already intertwine sponsorship with their development efforts. For some, it may not mean a partial or wholesale revision of child sponsorship, but its abandonment altogether.

Such a project speaks against colonial architectures of power, including their more recent neoliberal articulations, inviting a more expansive notion of charity which is ethically and politically more creative. In this context, academic narratives have a vital role to play in redefining the discursive landscape into which schemes like child sponsorship currently speak. Developing a critical academic discourse of charity therefore forms part of broader intellectual

attempts to identify ways in which people can engage ethically with the world, and work out their own existence, in ways which do not embed the relational norms prescribed by neoliberalism regarding responsibility and global space. Thus, it requires a perspective which makes use of both postcolonial arguments and recent neoliberal critiques (as well as their intersections), but which does not become beholden to these, always retaining the right to imagine charity otherwise. This might involve making more use of the wealth of philosophical and theo-ethical resources which this thesis has identified as well-positioned to help in this regard.

Also useful in the above, and as a final point of implication for this project, this research mobilises literatures surrounding relational thinking, particularly those which deploy vocabularies of 'networks' and 'assemblages', to begin to build a nuanced geographical approach to charitable space. These literatures afford particular insights into the multitude of component parts co-configured into charity, and the processes and practices by which these become enfolded together. By suggesting that charitable space might be recast in terms of networks, networking processes and networked relations, this work allows for particular types and modes of relation to come to the fore which have hitherto been rarely acknowledged within existing literatures, and acknowledges ways in which more traditionally recognised building blocks of charitable space (e.g. 'staff', 'donors') become blurred together, negotiated and re-interpreted.

More broadly, then, this research not only contributes to a scant, fragmentary geographical literature on charity, it also suggests ways in which geographical approaches and resources might be usefully put to work in re-imagining charity in more interesting, enlivened ways. They, for instance, re-conceptualise charity as relationally and spatially multiple and dynamic, drawing together complex assemblages of care, concern and relational fidelity. They suggest that, instead of conforming to easy narratives of North-South power relations and black-and-white spatial imaginaries, charitable organisation and action emerge through and co-produce incredibly intricate configurations of space and scale, proximity and distance. They also provide important tools for getting to the heart of how charitable 'ethics' and 'politics' hang together and interweave, and for critiquing the potential of charity to foster inspiring approaches to democracy, cross-boundary justice and dialogue. Thus,

geographical approaches offer salient critiques and narratives for (potentially) re-imagining charity in a way which retains and valorises ethics such as attentiveness, responsiveness, care and self-giving love, but does not stop there, seeking to synthesise these with more politicised perspectives.

8.4 Limitations to the study

There are, of course, several limitations to this study which deserve acknowledgement. Firstly, my focus on child sponsorship clearly centralises one mode of giving, situated within one particular stream of charitable action, privileging a certain set of geographies, concerns and questions. Development-focused charity has provided a particularly useful way into discussing charity more broadly, not least because it represents an enduringly popular sector for British charitable organisation and donation, and because so many relevant literatures exist around its edges, establishing firm lines of critique and narrative thought which have provided helpful points of departure for this study. Nevertheless, many other forms of charitable action and organisation exist in the UK, most of which are thoroughly under-researched (Bryson et al, 2002), and all of which might provide useful insights, perspectives and questions regarding charitable space not covered by this research.

Secondly, this study has also privileged certain voices above others. By omitting the voices of recipients, for instance, it has foregrounded particular articulations of charity, particular perspectives on the gift relation, and particular experiences of giving and receiving, and has remained virtually silent regarding how the charity/development nexus is expressed and experienced differently as it is translated across the development network to recipients. This opens up the research to, not least, accusations of blind Western-centrism. My response to this is as follows: firstly, tracing charitable networks from giver to recipient and striving to include all stakeholder voices would have demanded a level of compromise regarding the analytical depth and coherence of the study, which I have deemed undesirable. In particular, whilst 'following the thing' (Cook et al, 2004) might be a provocative way to engage with international networks of charity, I feel that it would have prevented a deeper focus on the intricate socio-political landscapes within which these networks are embedded- a key focus

and contribution of this work. Secondly, vast swathes of literature exist within development geography and development studies exploring how development projects are disseminated 'in the field', including many projects which are undoubtedly backed by Northern 'charity' (e.g. Bornstein, 2001; Wydick et al, 2013, for child sponsorship). Whilst these are themselves not comprehensive, and considerable space still exists for exploring the flows between project support and dissemination (cf. Korf, 2007), as well as for making space for recipients to speak and be heard, they do provide important, well-defined bodies of critique. In other words, and somewhat incongruously, the Western spaces of charity donation remain some of the least well understood spaces in development networks (Baillie Smith, 2008), despite the apparent Western-centrism of such a focus. That said, the perspectives of charity recipients nonetheless provide vital, no-less-important topics for future research.

Further to this, by choosing to omit the voices of donors who deliberately avoid child sponsorship, or who have turned from it towards other modes of giving, the research has also privileged particularly supportive stories of sponsorship and charitable action. Whilst I did not set out to compare these various perspectives (indeed, public critiques of child sponsorship are well-established, providing important surrogate critical material in this respect, though their uptake into praxis cannot be assumed to be simple), and whilst the supporters involved in this study provided surprisingly diverse narratives and views, there remains ample scope for exploring other existent landscapes of charitable critique; even anti-charitable landscapes (though accessing these empirically might conceivably prove more difficult).

Fourthly, the study has been limited somewhat by the empirical confinement of many participants to one-time research encounters, often over the telephone or via email, preventing depth of discussion, the development of rapport and the acquisition of other dimensions of embodied knowledge. Whilst various tactics were employed to overcome these issues (see chapter 4), and for many participants (e.g. IDNGO staff) other modes of encounter simply weren't plausible, the study would undoubtedly have benefited from multi-encounter participation and some more sustained ethnographic work (particularly in IDNGOs).

Finally, as regards interpretative strategy, my own approach owes particular debts to my faith background and prior experiences of child sponsorship (see chapter 1), as well as my own personal interest in the intricacies of giving hearts, minds and relational contexts. This has meant that throughout, I have been particularly concerned with synthesising 'broader' debates about international development charity with the micro-dynamics of charitable praxis and feeling, developing a perspective which is largely missing from the existing literature on IDNGO fundraising in the Global North. Additionally, my focus on faith-based giving is necessarily framed by my own partial, situated knowledges of faith and belief, privileging some perspectives above others (for instance, I have personally found evangelical Christian modes of faith praxis more analytically accessible, because I am already familiar with and interested in them; scholarship predicated on an interest in secularity and charity might have unfolded very differently). Thus, whilst approaching this study from a point of personal faith has undoubtedly produced a very particular, though no less valid, perspective on charity and giving, and has opened up particular opportunities to blur the boundaries between researcher and researched, it will undoubtedly have also fostered the development of particular blind spots. Further research emanating from different positionings and points of interest in charity will be needed to develop a more nuanced, multi-faceted set of perspectives.

8.5 Recommendations for future research

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?" Rabbi Hillel

In many respects, this study really provides a starting point, interrogating one set of landscapes and perspectives in order to draw out some more broadly relevant insights for a phenomenon that has long been crying out for geographical attention. It is not intended to privilege a certain set of narrations and understandings, but to disrupt simplistic assumptions and open up new questions and possibilities. Vast scope exists for explorations of other forms of giving, interconnections between charity and other forms of 'pro-social' action (e.g. volunteering) and, as discussed previously, dimensions of charitable landscapes and networks which have been afforded less space here.

Regarding child sponsorship specifically, it would be particularly worthwhile to connect this work on donation and Northern charitable organisation with the experiences and voices of sponsored children, particularly in ways which recognise the diversity of scheme setups (how do sponsored children experience 'indirect' sponsorship schemes, for instance, and the various efforts IDNGOs make to involve children meaningfully?) and the diverse spaces made for sponsor engagements. More broadly, research might explore how the social and ethical complexities present in child sponsorship translate (or don't) to forms of giving which seem more mundane and/or one-off, such as on-street collections. Furthermore, to flesh out the connections between charity and identity/belonging, whilst this research has privileged questions surrounding faith, religion and spirituality, other work might explore how charitable space interconnects with race, age or gender.

For all of these potential avenues, this research stresses the utility of assemblage-type theories for understanding how different formulations of charitable space become ordered and hang together, and for exploring how they change shape and break down. Such theories retain a practical ethos of openness and humility which might productively undergird a concern for imagining how charity could be otherwise, pushing critiques beyond paralysis and cynicism. It remains, then, to underline the potential normative salience of this and other such research for both professional and academic understandings of doing good, and for concerns to do good *well*. In this study, I have offered alternative narratives to those typically used to apprehend charity, and have pointed to ways in which the ethical content of charity-in-practice might proffer possibilities for both individual and collective engagements with very real issues of poverty and inequality. After all, as Castree et al (2010, following Marx), have said- "*the point is to change it*", to work for good, rather than to engage in critique for its own sake. As such, I have not designed to deconstruct charity irreparably, but have instead striven to point to how it might be put to work productively. I have also sought to valorise the propensities of faith to open up possibilities for love and hope in the face of undeniable evils- not exclusively, and not always inspiringly, but with more potential than it is usually accorded. As such, this study provides an acknowledgement and a valorisation of geographies of hope which prevail stalwartly within charitable

space, despite its baggage. Further academic interest could provide immensely fertile ground for developing these acknowledgments; likewise, such a project could provide immensely fertile ground for developing more sensitive, committed, responsible academic praxis (Cloke, 2002).

Appendix A: Letter to IDNGO staff



5th January 2012

Academic address:

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Dear XXXXXX,

My name is Frances Rabbitts and I am currently in my second year of research for a PhD at Exeter University, working within the Geography department. My research concerns child sponsorship schemes, exploring ways in which they are practised by charities and experienced by supporters. I hope to produce work that enhances understandings of the nature of charity, as well as the potential that child sponsorship has to change lives. I have already written and submitted a paper this year which lays the groundwork for this, and can provide further evidence of my academic position in the form of references.

I am interested in carrying out some of my research with XXXX. This might include analysing your online resources and/or interviewing members of staff. I would be particularly interested to find out how you manage your public relations, and the advantages and difficulties of using child sponsorship as a scheme. However, my plans are flexible and I am willing to work with whatever resources XXXX might be able to afford me.

I would appreciate your feedback concerning the possibilities of this research. Again, I am very willing to be flexible in how it unfolds, and sensitive to any concerns that you might have. If you would like to discuss my research ideas and how they might progress before making a decision, do not hesitate to contact me. Please use my home address for all communication, as I work from home. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Frances Rabbitts

University of Exeter

Grassroots Trust	Grassroots	25/04/12	Directors (also founders)	Face to face	Notes
International Childcare Trust	ICT	13/12/11	Programmes Officer	Email	Transcript
Kindu Trust	Kindu Trust	15/02/12 09/07/12	Director of Operations Founder	Telephone Email	Notes Transcript
Karuna Action (was Kingscare)	Kingscare	25/11/11	Development Co-ordinator	Email	Transcript
Link Ethiopia	Link	06/02/12	Sponsorship Manager	Email	Transcript
Plan UK	Plan	09/11/12	Supporter Relations Manager	Telephone	Recording
Project Mala	Project Mala	24/11/11	Chairman (also founder)	Face to face	Recording
SOS Children's Villages	SOS	11/10/11	Marketing Director, Sponsor Relations Manager	Face to face	Notes
Toybox	Toybox	30/11/11	CEO	Face to face	Recording

Appendix C: Sponsor interview table

Pseudonym	IDNGO affiliation	Interview date	Interview type	Record
Marg	Grassroots	29/05/12	Telephone	Recording
April	Grassroots	31/05/12	Email	Transcript
Luke	Grassroots	22/06/12	Telephone	Recording
Sam	Grassroots	06/08/12	Telephone	Recording
Delia	Grassroots	31/08/12	Telephone	Recording
Johnny	Grassroots	05/09/12	Telephone	Recording
Caitlin	Grassroots	14/09/12	Telephone	Recording
Rosemary	Grassroots	17/10/12	Telephone	Recording
Carla	Kindu Trust	25/02/12	Email	Transcript
Richard	Kindu Trust	26/02/12	Email	Transcript
Adam	Kindu Trust	27/02/12	Email	Transcript
Elsie	Kindu Trust	27/02/12; 06/03/12	Email	Transcript
Matthew	Kindu Trust	27/02/12	Telephone	Recording
Audrey	Kindu Trust	27/02/12	Telephone	Recording
Julie	Kindu Trust	28/02/12	Telephone	Recording
Millie	Kindu Trust	28/02/12	Telephone	Recording
Sarah	Kindu Trust	29/02/12	Telephone	Recording
Lorraine	Kindu Trust	29/02/12	Telephone	Recording
Emily	Kindu Trust	01/03/12	Email	Transcript
Anne	Kindu Trust	01/03/12	Telephone	Recording
Peter	Kindu Trust	02/03/12	Telephone	Recording
Hilary	Kindu Trust	05/03/12	Email	Transcript
Pat	Kindu Trust	07/03/12	Telephone	Recording
Jack	Kindu Trust	07/03/12	Email	Transcript
Chloe	Kindu Trust	10/03/12; 12/03/12	Email	Transcript
Jo	Kindu Trust	14/03/12; 28/03/12	Email	Transcript
Margot	Kindu Trust	16/03/12	Email	Transcript
Susanna	Kindu Trust	18/03/12	Email	Transcript
Tom	Kindu Trust	22/03/12	Email	Transcript
Hugh and Catherine Sharp**	Plan; Kindu Trust	13/08/12	Face to face	Recording
Esther	Plan	14/09/12	Telephone	Recording
Louise	Plan	20/09/12	Face to face	Recording
Helen	formerly Plan	14/10/12	Telephone	Recording
Lizzie	Plan	16/07/13	Email	Transcript
Jane	Plan	22/07/13	Email	Transcript
Thalia	Plan	30/07/13	Email	Transcript
Sharon	Plan	02/08/13	Email	Transcript
Ruth	Plan	07/09/13	Email	Transcript
Charlotte*	Compassion	25/01/12	Email	Transcript
Natalie*	Compassion	26/01/12	Email	Transcript
Robert*	Compassion	27/01/12	Email	Transcript
Fran*	Compassion	27/01/12	Email	Transcript
Annie*	Compassion	27/01/12	Email	Transcript
Rebecca*	Compassion	29/01/12	Email	Transcript
Melissa*	Compassion	31/01/12	Email	Transcript
Simon*	Compassion	02/02/12	Email	Transcript
Caroline*	Compassion	03/02/12	Email	Transcript
Lottie*	Compassion	04/02/12	Email	Transcript
David*	Compassion	10/02/12	Email	Transcript
Kat	Compassion	30/08/12	Face to face	Recording
Tony	Compassion	30/08/12	Face to face	Recording
Kelly	Compassion	19/09/12	Face to face	Recording

Lucy	Compassion	13/01/13	Face to face	Recording
Gabby*	Compassion	27/06/13	Face to face	Recording
Lydia	Compassion	24/04/13	Telephone	Recording
Amy	Compassion	24/04/13	Telephone	Recording

* Compassion sponsors marked thus are also Compassion 'advocates'.

** Sponsor names marked thus are real names, not pseudonyms. These individuals' details are publicly available online and in official IDNGO publications; and the interviewees did not request anonymity.

Appendix D: Child sponsorship charter (copy from Plan interviewee, see Appendix B).

CHILD SPONSORSHIP CHARTER

Developed by ActionAid, EveryChild, Plan UK, SOS Childrens Villages, World Vision

Supported by the Fundraising Standards Board and the Institute of Fundraising.

The objective of this charter is to provide clear guiding principles for child sponsorship programmes and how they are marketed.

1.0 Basis for Child Sponsorship

- 1.1 “Child sponsorship” is a form of relationship between a sponsor and a child in the developing world facilitated by a development agency. This is done in order to help the donor understand development through an individual child and provide a focus for their giving.
- 1.2 Sponsored children are amongst the beneficiaries of programmes funded by the development agency, which receives payment from the sponsor. This marketing/engagement mechanism is crucial as a reliable, regular income stream in order that the development agency can offer sustainable development programmes. This is in order to achieve the maximum benefit to the child and their community.
- 1.3 The development agency informs the sponsors of the status of their sponsored children, projects and communities. The very process of operating a child sponsorship programme engages local people, makes development agencies accountable at a family and community level, and provides children confidence through their link with their sponsor.

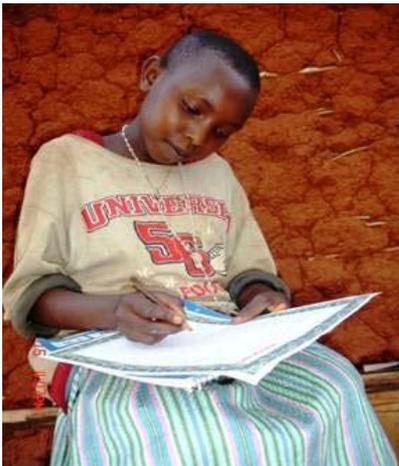
2.0 Governing principles

- 2.1 Programmes operated by development agencies operate according to the best practices available in international aid.
- 2.2 Development agencies are guided by the principles contained in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- 2.3 Development agencies will obtain the approval of the child’s parents, guardians or relevant authority, before any child is sponsored. All development agencies will ensure that there is no discrimination in the selection of children for sponsorship.
- 2.4 Sponsors, sponsored children, other children on projects, children’s families and the local communities are all treated with respect and robust child protection policies exist to protect the safety, privacy and dignity of all parties [for <organisations name> child protection policy please visit our website at <URL> or call <tel no>]
- 2.5 Detailed financial tracking varies but the benefits to a sponsored child and their community are tracked by the development agency and reported to the sponsor through annual communications.

3.0 Marketing

- 3.1 Development agencies which promise or imply benefits to sponsored children in their marketing materials ought to have procedures to confirm that sponsored children received implied or promised benefits.
- 3.2 Marketing materials ought to be accurate and current in their portrayal of conditions involving those families and children depicted. Promotional appeals and marketing materials using visual images to solicit donations ought to accurately reflect the current work of the relevant development agency. Where historical images are used, the context in which the image was created shall be clearly identified in the appeal. Particular care should be taken in the use of images of children so as to ensure the development agencies compliance with existing standards on child protection.
- 3.3 Development agencies which do not restrict the use of all the funds raised directly for the child's benefit must communicate this practice in sponsorship marketing materials.
- 3.4 Development agencies ought to clearly communicate to sponsors the benefit to sponsored children and their communities and shall periodically communicate the progress made towards achieving such benefit.
- 3.5 All development agencies should refer to the Institute of Fundraising's Accountability & Transparency in Fundraising Code of Fundraising Practice (sections 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3) and the relevant CAP codes while developing their marketing material.

<image of sponsored child>



<Caption to include: Name of Child, Agency, Location of Project>

Emelyne, ActionAid, Burundi

<statement from sponsored child>

“For me, it is more than an honour to be sponsored among thousands of children who were born in the same conditions as I was... And whenever I’m invited to write a message to my sponsor, I hear my heart beating quicker than it does normally. Indeed, when I am writing the message, I feel I have not been forgotten, I understand that I have value, definitely I know there are people who think about me. This gives me courage to keep on going to school”.

Emelyne writing her child message

END

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