



The future of decoloniality of aid in a classified world

A Ghanaian case study

Marjolein Johanna Gerrie Hansum

June 2023

MSc Program:	International Development Studies
Specialisation:	Sociology of development
Supervisor:	Dr. Ir. Lotje de Vries
Second examiner:	Dr. Ir. Birgit Boogaard
Thesis code:	SDC80736
Student number:	1043821

Table of content

1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical context	6
2.1 Towards post-development thinking.....	6
2.2 Decoloniality defined	10
2.3 The call for decoloniality	12
2.4 The main actors on stage	18
3. Capturing the Ghanaian context	20
3.1 Ghana's (de)colonial foundation	21
3.2 Aid in Ghana	23
3.3 The reclassification and Ghana Beyond Aid	26
4. Methodology.....	31
4.1 Research design	31
4.2 Data collection	32
4.3 Limitations & opportunities of the research (methodology)	34
4.4 Data analysis	36
5. Results	38
5.1 A changing funding landscape	38
5.2 The gender equality agenda as an example.....	45
5.3 Changing power dynamics	48
5.4 A Ghanaian interpretation	52
6. Discussion & Conclusions.....	56
7. References.....	62
Appendices.....	67
Appendix A: Description of interviewees.....	67

List of tables and figures

Figure 1	GDP per capita in Ghana against the International Development Association (IDA) threshold (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012)
Figure 2	Net official development assistance and official aid received in US\$ billion – Ghana (World Bank, 2019)
Figure 3	Methodological note on tracking development co-operation through international institutions in DAC Statistics (OECD, 2023a)
Figure 4	Volume of crude oil produced in Ghana, in barrels per day (Statista, 2022)
Figure 5	GDP per capita in Ghana against the International Development Association (IDA) threshold (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012)
Figure 6	Net official development assistance and official aid received in US\$ billion – Ghana (World Bank, 2019)
Figure 7	Themes of Changes from STAR Ghana foundation (STAR Ghana, 2023)
Table 1	Aid flows received by the Government of Ghana between 1983 and 1991 in millions US\$ (Herbst, 1993)
Table 2	Percentage share of Ghana's GDP, by sector from 2006 to 2010 (Jerven & Duncan, 2012)

List of abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GhBA	Ghana Beyond Aid
GNP	Gross National Product
GoG	Government of Ghana
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LIC	Low-Income Country
LMIC	Lower-Middle Income Country
NGDO	Non-Governmental Domestic Organisation
ODA	Official Development Aid
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
WB	World Bank

Acknowledgements

Being the daughter of 'non-profit' parents, I have grown up with a strong sense of justice and a warm heart for non-governmental organisations striving to make this world a better place. So, when the time came to choose a further education, I positioned my passions into that direction. It wasn't until I was following the master International Development Studies at Wageningen University, however, that my eyes were really opened to the (often skewed) power dynamics that are still at play in the contemporary development sector. Each course challenged me to think even more critically than the one before, bringing me to this thesis paper, closing off my years at Wageningen University, on a topic that has come to lie very close to my heart.

I would lie if I would say that this has been an easy process. As this thesis process was strongly interwoven with an intense knee surgery and revalidation process, I believe it is fair to say that this past year has taught me to take life as it comes, quite literally and metaphorically putting one foot in front of the other. This was a difficult process and, in all honesty, I could not have done it without the support of my loved ones: my parents, brother and sister as well as my friends who have supported me in more ways than I could possibly write down.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Lotje de Vries; who has guided me along this challenging path with the utmost patience and flexibility. Thank you so much for reminding me of the finish line every time I knocked on your door confused and stressed. We made it!

Abstract

Over the last years, the term 'decolonising aid' has become a buzz-word in the international development sector that is much thought, written and spoken about. While academically it finds its origins in the global south, in contemporary development praxis it is mostly pushed forward by global north development actors. Several decolonial theorists have argued that relationships of financial dependence between global north and global south development actors hinder the latter to actively engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda in fear of losing their sources of funding if they do. This research focusses on the Ghanaian aid sector as a case study to determine to what extent financial independence of global south development actors on those in the global north indeed functions as a catalyser for the decoloniality of aid agenda. In 2010, Ghana was reclassified by the World Bank as a lower-middle income country (LMIC) rather than a low-income country (LIC), a change in status long desired and aimed for by the Ghanaian government. As many large international development actors use this classification system to determine the allocation of their aid funds worldwide, Ghana's reclassification triggered a significant efflux of foreign aid funds from the country. Building on the work of Emmanuel Kumi amongst others, this research focusses on the effectiveness of the alternative resource mobilisation strategies applied by Ghanaian Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs) in response to this changing funding landscape; ultimately discussing to what extent the financial independence suggested by World Bank statistics and Kumi's work has indeed proven to be fertile ground for the decoloniality of aid agenda to root itself in.

Key words: decoloniality of aid, World Bank, Ghana, classification, lower-middle income country

1. Introduction

Over the last years, the term 'decolonising aid' has become a buzz-word in the international development sector. Especially among development actors in the global north it is much thought, written and spoken about. Pushed forward by African and Latin-American scholars as an alternative to mainstream development practice, it centres itself around the debate of persevering contemporary power dynamics in the international development sector resulting from colonial histories. In essence, the school of theory highlights how development discourse and praxis have always, and still today, favoured western knowledge and practice. Ultimately, this has perpetually fuelled power imbalances between development actors in the global north, and those operating in the global south, reinforcing neo-colonial structures. Therefore, the agenda of decolonising aid advocates for a shift in power towards local communities through acknowledging historical injustices and prioritising local knowledge systems, perspectives on development, ownership and self-determination that are driven by local needs and resources.

However, while the agenda for decolonising aid indeed originates from the global south, the actual practice and implementation of the agenda seems to be mainly driven by development actors in the global north (Mawdsley, 2012). As development researcher Themrise Khan highlights "the discussion around the decolonisation of aid practices is, in reality, extremely one-sided and Western-centric. It rarely includes the perspectives of those in the Global South. Many of us in the South do not agree with or relate to this terminology. In fact, we see it as a further imposition of a white saviour complex, with the powerful West once again deciding what is good for us and how this must be done" (Khan, 2021, para. 3).

As verbalised by Khan, global south development actors may not see themselves reflected in the decoloniality of aid agenda. Several authors have pointed out that the limited engagement of these actors with the agenda can be allocated to the financial dependency underpinning these skewed power dynamics (Mawdsley, 2012; Hickel, 2017; Amanor, 2009 & Rapley, 2017; Moyo, 2009). In their work, these authors highlight how financial dependence of global south actors on those in the global north constrain local agency and autonomy of global south development actors to adequately address and challenge these power imbalances and push forward their own perspectives, knowledges and priorities.

Their compliance with the prioritisation of western knowledge and development practice resulting from their want and/or need for financial support so silences their voices. Therefore, these decolonial theorists have argued that financial independence is essential in the movement to decolonise aid as it promotes agency and self-determination over local development agendas and facilitates the presentation of local pathways towards development. This research engages with this assumption, analysing to what extent financial independence has a decolonising effect on the power dynamics between development actors in the global south and those in the global north. In doing so, the Ghanaian development sector was adopted as a case study as it may be considered an aid sector that is highly (financially) dependent on foreign aid funds but has experienced a major efflux of foreign donor funds over the past decade. Therefore, this case study lends itself perfectly to the analysis of the extent to which financial independence indeed has a decolonising effect on power relations between global north and global south development actors.

Development programs provided by Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs), with the help of foreign aid funds, are still very much a reality within Ghana. It is estimated that the country hosts about 6500 such NGDOs (Chanase, 2021). Within the context of this research, the term NGDOs has been chosen explicitly as it addresses those non-governmental organisations that are founded and registered in Ghana, excluding those that have their roots in western countries from its scope. In his work, Chanase emphasises that Ghanaian NGDOs generally lack a particular thematic focus as their activities largely depend on the funding supply offered through foreign aid. “A distinguishing feature of African NGOs, including those in Ghana, is their heavy dependence/reliance on foreign donor support and inability to find other ways of sustaining themselves” (Chanase, 2021, p. 4). Chanase emphasises that in an attempt to secure funding, the development agenda presented by Ghanaian NGDOs often shifts along with the one determined by development actors in the global north.

Over the past decade, however, Ghanaian NGDOs have been presented with a significant funding challenge as the foreign aid funds flowing into the country have halved since 2010. In that year, Ghana was reclassified by the World Bank as a lower-*middle* income country (LMIC) rather than a low-income country (LIC). Since 1995, the Ghanaian Government has made significant efforts to reach this new status to middle-income

country through their Vision 2020 plan. This vision outlined the ambitions to “transform Ghana from a low-income country to a middle-income country within one generation” (GoG, 1995, p. 7). Through a somewhat unconventional technical rebasing exercise, however, Ghana achieved their reclassification goal a decade earlier than planned (Moss and Majerowicz, 2012). While the World Bank was already reporting steady GDP growth on Ghana, a recalculation on how to measure the economy lifted the GDP per capita suddenly from below \$800 to \$1363 (as shown in figure 1). Having systematically underestimated the services sector combined with the revenues derived from a newly discovered oil source that were now taken into consideration, Ghana’s GDP grew with 69% overnight, on paper; reclassifying the country as a LMIC rather than a LIC.

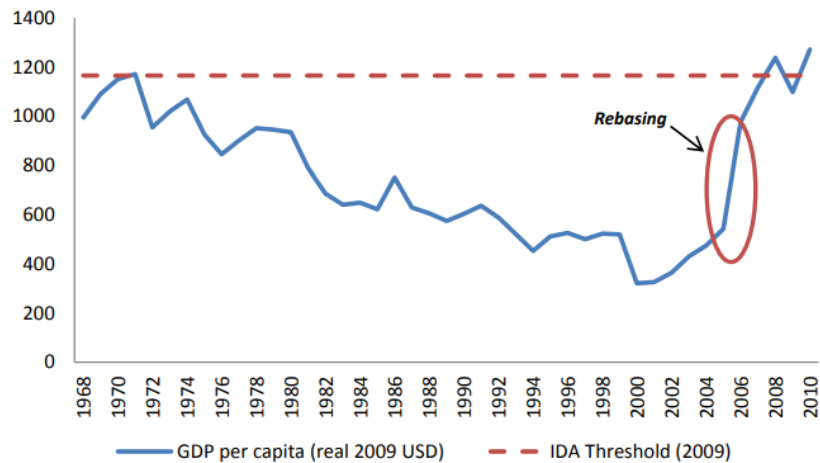


Figure 1: GDP per capita in Ghana against the International Development Association (IDA) threshold (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012)

This classification system is used by many international development actors, such as bilateral institutions as well as large International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), to determine where to allocate their aid funds. As a result of the reclassification, Ghana’s influx of foreign aid funds suddenly plummeted from \$ 1.8 billion in 2010 to \$ 0.9 billion in 2020 (see figure 2). (The sudden peak in 2015 can be explained by a one-time debt service provided by the International Monetary Fund).

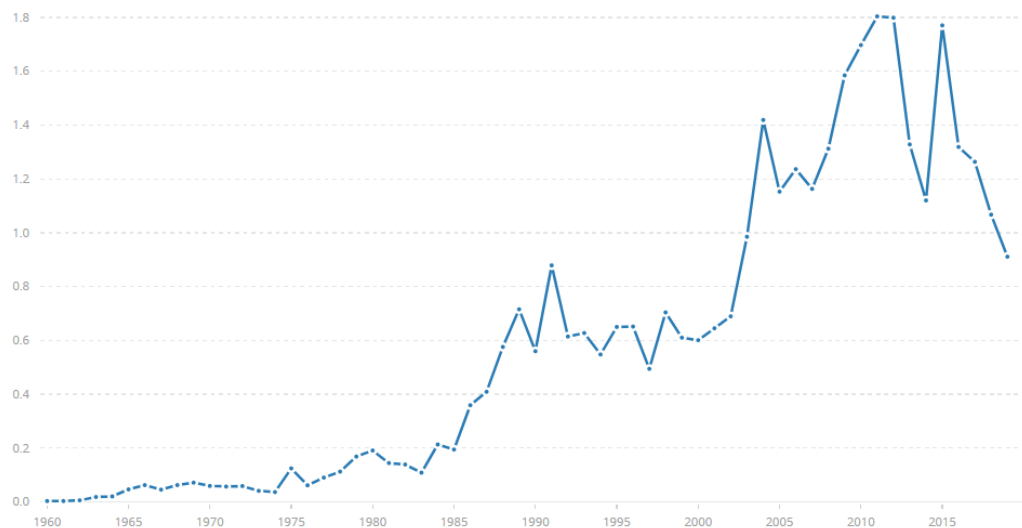


Figure 2: Net official development assistance and official aid received in US\$ billion – Ghana (World Bank, 2019).

For Ghanaian NGDOs this presented an immediate funding challenge. While some research has been done about NGDOs’ responses to the changing aid landscape in Ghana (Kumi, 2017), little attention has been given to the effects of this sudden financial independence from foreign aid on the changing relations and power dynamics between Ghanaian NGDOs and their donors in the global north. This research aimed to address exactly this topic, spotlighting the perspective of global south development actors that is often overlooked (as highlighted by Khan). In doing so, the following research question was presented:

To what extent has Ghana’s reclassification to a middle-income country contributed to the decoloniality of aid among Ghanaian Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs)?

The following sub-questions served to answer the main research question posed above:

- 1. How has the financial dependence of Ghanaian NGDOs on global north development actors changed since 2010 according to local development practitioners?*
- 2. How have these changes impacted power dynamics between Ghanaian NGDOs and development actors in the global north?*
- 3. What value is attached to the experienced consequences of these changes by local development practitioners?*

Besides offering an insight into the current state of the Ghanaian aid sector a decade after the reclassification, this research aims to critically discuss to what extent such a strong driver for funding allocation, on which a large part of the international development sector rests, either facilitates or obstructs the growing call for decoloniality of aid.

The term 'decoloniality' has been deliberately adopted within the context of this research as opposed to the, perhaps more familiar, term 'decolonisation'. While 'decolonisation' refers to physical political shifts of power between colonisers and their (previous) subjects, Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018) argue that 'decoloniality' does not necessarily address these (past) physical changes but rather "is a mindset or praxis; it is an orientation toward culture marked by a commitment to root out that which remains in culture, education, society, and so on from the colonial era. It disobeys, and delinks from [the colonial matrix of power], constructing paths and praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living" (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 194). Chapter 2 of this thesis paper, outlining the theoretical context, will elaborate further on this specific terminology.

Leading up to the discussion in the final chapter of this research paper, first chapter two addresses the school of theory surrounding the debate on decoloniality of aid, after which its relation to the Ghanaian (development) context is further explored in chapter three. Chapter four outlines the methodology of this research, after which chapter five delves into the results of the data collected. These results will be discussed and positioned within the larger context and debate on decoloniality of aid in chapter six.

2. Theoretical context

As this research positions itself within the larger debate on decoloniality of aid, this theoretical chapter further elaborates on this school of theory. It outlines the historical roots of the agenda, illustrating how it was presented as an alternative to mainstream development practice. Additionally, the terminology is further defined after which the core of the theory as well as some of its critiques will be discussed. Finally, its translation from theory to development practice is discussed, introducing the main actors on the development stage. This chapter aims to present a theoretical foundation for chapter three which outlines how the school of decoloniality (of aid) relates to the Ghanaian case study.

2.1 Towards post-development thinking

To understand the relevance of decoloniality of aid as a countermovement to traditional development practice, it is important to comprehend what theory and practice it exactly engages with and (partially) rejects. Therefore, this section outlines classic development theory, leading up to the emergence of decoloniality as a school of thought.

The early stages of traditional international development work were largely characterised by modernisation theory, dependency theory and structuralism. Modernisation theory emerged during the fifties of the last century and fundamentally outlined an evolutionary linear perspective on economic, social and political development work (Chirot & Hall, 1982). One of the most well-known illustrations of modernisation theory is the theory on growth stages as presented by Solow which highlighted how each society supposedly moves through certain consecutive growth stages in order to achieve modernisation; from traditional economies, towards take-off (involving the adoption of scientific methods of technology and encouraging industrialisation), finally reaching maturity with high consumption (Solow, 1956). Through following “the example of the west, modernisation theory tended to refuse the idea that deep structural factors might prevent economic progress, and more importantly, that the very international context of modernisation might in itself be an obstacle” (Chirot & Hall, 1982, p. 83). Classic development practice was built onto the notion that countries in the global south could (and should) simply develop by adopting western knowledge, practice, technology and skills.

During the sixties, however, this notion was rejected with the rise of World-Systems theory and dependency theory which emerged as alternatives to the mainstream modernistic ideas of international development theory to explain the root causes of 'underdevelopment' in Latin America. It was presented as a critique against the assumption that the lack of development could simply be ascribed to persevering 'backwardness' and still unadopted western practice, highlighting the imbalanced capital and economic flows between countries rather as the root cause for underdevelopment.

In his work, Wallerstein emphasised the shift from 'mini-systems' to world-systems: "unit(s) with a single division of labour and multiple cultural centres" (Wallerstein, 1979, p. 229). According to this theory, over the centuries a world-economy developed with well-developed towns at its core, peripheries at the edges to fuel the expansion of these core countries, and semi-peripheries functioning as bridges between both. In contrast to modernisation theory, Wallerstein argued that underdevelopment is not simply a contemporary state of lack of rationality, a pre-condition to Solow's economic stage of 'take-off', but rather one of the fundamental building blocks of capitalism, its core lying at deep structural inequalities and systemic exploitation built into our world-economy. Given these structural inequalities, core countries systematically develop at the cost of periphery countries due to unequal wages, profit margins and labour divisions. In his work on internal colonialism, Grogopo (2013) emphasises how these structures are often not only held up by core countries but often also facilitated by the periphery ruling classes enforcing internal colonialist power dynamics. Such dynamics exclude those internally colonised based on race or class from participation in political practice and thus restriction their decision-making power. Through doing so, dominant-dependent power dynamics have even permeated internal state structures, ultimately conserving the same dynamics between core and periphery countries and fuelling persistent dependency of the latter on the former (Kay, 2011). Contrasting modernisation theory, dependency theorists reject the idea of a linear path towards development and rather point towards the needed restructuring of our economic world systems in order for change to really come about.

In response to dependency, structuralism emerged during the seventies. While dependency theory highlighted external factors and relationships that contributed to the development of some countries and underdevelopment of others, structuralism focussed on domestic economic institutions, policies and structures. While dependency theorists mainly present the state as an external force of dominance, structuralists emphasise its intervening responsibility to promote domestic industrialisation (Dos Santos, 1970).

Focussing on duality, structuralists highlight the need to shift labour and resources from traditional sectors to modern sectors facilitated by state policies promoting, for example, import substitution industrialisation to promote domestic industries and reduce dependence on imports. While dependency theory is cautious about the role of the state in development, considering its intervention as potentially reinforcing dependency and serving the interests of external powers, structuralism presents state intervention as a potential road towards economic development (Cardoso, 1969). In this difference, dependency theorists tend to focus on addressing power imbalances between global north and global south actors, while structuralists rather aim to address in-state power imbalances, presenting domestic structural change as a solution to underdevelopment. In summary, classic development theory largely focusses on economic development as a root cause for underdevelopment and as a pathway forward for 'underdeveloped' countries. Different sub-schools of theory each focus on adoption of western knowledge and practice, relations of dependency between various actors as external influence on underdevelopment and the role of state intervention in (under)development.

Positioning itself as a countermovement against classic development theory, post-development theory emerged during the eighties and nineties, rejecting linear and dualist approaches to development and advocating for the focus on cultural, social and ecological contexts. Alternatives to classic development theory that emerged highlighted sustainability, gender and environmental lenses (Kothari, 2019). These alternative aid models were increasingly characterised by poststructuralist methodologies, fundamentally rejecting the binary oppositions often presented in classic development theory, such as 'west-v-rest' and 'north-v-south'. While many of these new models highlighted different perspectives and frames through which to analyse international development work, it was Arturo Escobar who presented a more radical critique on international development, introducing post-development theory. Escobar (1995) argued that development was yet another way of the west to confirm its moral and cultural superiority through the 'discovery' of the poor in the post-colonial era. Through development jargon and the transfer of western norms, values and ideologies, and the limited power of receiving countries to resist this movement, development should ultimately be seen as another act of cultural imperialism that received very little critique and resistance (Escobar, 1995). In response to this, one of Escobar's key concepts was the idea of "pluriversality". He proposed that multiple, diverse worldviews and knowledge systems exist across different cultures and societies, and these need to be acknowledged

and valued instead of being homogenized under a universal model of development. Escobar emphasized the importance of understanding and respecting local knowledge, practices, and cosmologies, presenting transformation of systems of culture and knowledge production as the way forward rather than focussing on economic roots as a cause for underdevelopment.

Escobar's work paralleled the work of Edward Said who wrote about 'orientalism', pointing out the process of 'Othering' that lies at the foundation of development work. The Palestinian author emphasised how global north (development) actors continue to essentialise the antithetical binaries between poorer countries as lacking (fundamental values) and 'backward' and western countries as 'civilised' (Said, 1978). According to Said, the distinction between 'the self' and 'the other' made by the West, formed the starting point of discussion and resulting actions. Looking through the lens presented by Escobar, development work can be considered a modern-day version of Orientalism in which it is upon the rich to manage the poor and determine their pathways into the future. Escobar argued that the more the development sector claims improvements in its approaches, the more it tends to continue to export and impose its western agenda.

Over the last two decades, post-development theory and its critiques on 'traditional' development practices have received increasing attention. In essence, it spotlights how western knowledge production and development praxis have been, and still are, prioritised over that of the global south. Post-development theorists have argued that through development work, western countries maintain their influence on 'Third World' identities and reproduce global inequalities and western supremacy over poorer countries (Kothari, 2019).

Since the emergence of post-development theory, several sub-strands of theory have developed within this school of thought, one of which being that of decoloniality of aid. Decolonial thinking was first introduced and explored by academics in Africa and Latin-America in the 90s as an alternative to mainstream post-development studies, but has gained significant traction (in the global north) over the past years as a critique on classic development work and (academic) discourse. Decolonial scholars in essence distinguish themselves from previous post-development theorists as they deliberately move beyond the roots of 'west-vs-rest' dichotomies that these theorists engage with. Decolonial

theorists emphasise that these dichotomies are not just locked into the past but are deeply incorporated into our contemporary (development) practices and beliefs. Therefore, colonial power dynamics cannot be considered historic relics but are seen as drivers that continuously reinforce imbalances in our beliefs, language, knowledge systems and economic structures on a daily basis and are yet to be disempowered. Decolonial theory rejects linear approaches to development that are focused on transfer of western knowledge and praxis as well as the need for industrialisation. In contrast, it points out the underlying assumptions and power dynamics embedded in classic development theory and argues that these past approaches and perspectives have in fact encouraged the continuance of these unbalanced power dynamics between global north and global south development actors. Decolonial theory presents the centralisation and prioritisation of knowledge and practice of global south development actors as the needed change to dismantling these skewed power dynamics. Transformation of cultural narratives and systems of knowledge production that are sensitised to disempowering these dynamics are seen as the pathway towards development rather than focussing on economic development and capitalist market structures, as often promoted in classic development theory.

2.2 Decoloniality defined

The term 'decolonisation', gaining prominence in the mid-twentieth century, originally refers to the processes of colonised countries becoming independent from their colonisers (Britannica, 2020). Throughout the nineties of the last century, the term was increasingly incorporated in relation to power dynamics within international development. Yet, until today, the application of this term to aid remains controversial. Critics argue that 'decolonisation' suggests a forceful relationship, while today, nations are autonomous in accepting or rejecting aid. Not disregarding that western actors indeed have the upper-hand, they argue that this cannot be considered a colonising practice. However, a second meaning to the term has been highlighted by indigenisation (Cull et al., 2018), decoloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), postcolonialism (Bhabra, 2014), post-development (Esteva & Escobar, 2017) and critical theory (Baum, 2015), emphasising that decolonisation also entails "the deconstruction of colonial ideologies regarding the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches" (Peace Direct, 2021, p. 12), which is still very visible in today's development practices. Building on the latter definition, novel discourse on decolonising aid points towards the more specific term of

'decoloniality' rather, which entails the "examination of the power matrix that has emerged during and after the colonial era" (Peace Direct, 2021, p. 15). Decoloniality focusses in particular on how these power dynamics have affected today's international (development) relations which have privileged the west, exported Eurocentric conceptualisations of modernity to poorer countries through development and marginalised many (especially people of colour) (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

In their work, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) very explicitly argue for the use of the term 'decoloniality' as opposed to the use of the term 'decolonisation', emphasising that there is a clear and important difference between both terms. While 'decolonisation' refers to the actual process of colonised subjects gaining physical and/or political independence from their colonisers, the term 'decoloniality' distinguishes itself in the way that it addresses a mindset and praxis. Decoloniality practices address the remains of colonial power dynamics that can still be found in today's culture, education, (development) practices, etc. Anneeth Hundle (2019) builds onto the work of Mignolo and Walsh, clarifying the academic boundaries of the term 'decoloniality' by the things it is not. She highlights that decoloniality is not ensured through diversification and simple 'diversity initiatives' as these "sustain the status quo of racial, economic, and epistemological injustices" (p. 290). Decoloniality rather seeks to disarm such injustices through the "ongoing undoing of colonisation" and "an understanding of the decolonizing methodologies in relation to research, knowledge production, and social criticism" (p. 289-299).

While the term 'decolonisation' may focus on power dynamics in the past, the term 'decoloniality' very explicitly distinguishes between past physical events and today's repercussions that are still deeply felt within societal mindset and praxis. In essence, decoloniality can be considered a broader set of theoretical and practical approaches that challenge the underlying assumptions, values and epistemologies of colonialism and how these have shaped our understanding of the world. Therefore, in line with this explicit distinction, the term 'decoloniality (of aid)' will be used within the context of this research, rather than the more familiar, and perhaps mainstream, term of 'decolonisation'.

2.3 The call for decoloniality

Now that decoloniality as a countermovement to classic development theory has been discussed and the terminology has been defined, the following section aims to further outline the main debates around which the school of decoloniality is centred as well as touch upon its main critiques.

Decolonial scholars argue that with the discovery of the 'new world' in the fifteenth century, the foundation was laid down for our contemporary modern/colonial world system. With the emergence of modernity in France, the first distinction was made between 'les anciens', the backwards and uncivilised, and 'les modernes', the modern and civilised (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). As this emergence coincided with colonial expansion, decolonial scholars argue that simultaneously colonised countries were first categorised as 'ancient' and became subjected to the supposedly superior western ideas of civilisation, development and capitalism.

Taking a closer look at the intersectionality between development work and (the end of) colonisation, we see the extant strong connections between former colonisers such as Britain, France and the Netherlands and their formerly colonised subjects, exactly through their humanitarian bonds. Post-development theorists such as Nye and Escobar highlight how, over the past decades, development interventions have become a tool to exert 'soft power', inviting actors in the global south to align with western political agendas as they were financially supported rather than imposing these agendas abroad through political interventions (Nye, 2009). Escobar (1995) argues that the fact that these relations that were historically deeply hierarchical may have seemingly transformed in name, but they have endured as a foundation for relations between these countries. He argues that contemporary development work is still very much rooted in the assumptions that periphery countries are still 'lacking' and 'underdeveloped', justifying the 'interventions' and 'developments' provided by core countries that are considered 'developed'.

Anibal Quijano, a decolonial theorist, has zoomed in on the repercussions of these assumptions in his extensive work on the 'coloniality of power', a theory which outlines how colonial structural processes have formed our modern world through systems of hierarchy, systems of knowledge and cultural systems. Systems of hierarchies distinguish based on racial classifications, created by western colonialists in which superiority and

inferiority values were assigned to the differences in these classifications. This ultimately formed the basis for the supposed superiority of a Eurocentric worldview and was eventually translated economically as these hierarchies became the foundational structure for racial division and exploitation in labour (Quijano, 2000). Systems of knowledge emphasise how within this Eurocentric worldview, the responsibility of valuable knowledge creation was assigned to the Europeans and Americans. “Europe’s hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony” (Quijano, 2000, p. 540). Finally, Quijano’s evaluation of cultural systems highlight how these systems have formed around this Eurocentric world view that continuously feed the idea of western superiority in knowledge and economic production processes. The assumption of the superiority of Europe’s modernist character, including its religion, science, technology, capitalist economy structures, among other things, has been deeply integrated into these cultures. In short, ‘coloniality of power’, as outlined by Quijano, highlights coloniality as the hidden (darker), inseparable flipside to modernity in which the value-coding foundations were laid for today’s society and hierarchical power dynamics were introduced between global north actors, seen as competent value creators, and actors in the global south, who were considered impotent.

The school of theory surrounding decoloniality of aid advocates a needed shift in power to combat the ‘coloniality of power’ that is considered to still permeate aid relations today. To do so, first, the remnants of colonial histories in today’s development sector and power dynamics need to be acknowledged. Decolonial theorists argue that doing so then offers a basis to discuss and debate key themes this agenda brings forward, revolving around power and representation, knowledge production and epistemic justice, ownership and localisation, and finally, reimagining development paradigms. The following key points outline the centre debates regarding decoloniality of aid and a compact discussion of their main critiques.

- **Power and representation** – as has been outlined, the decoloniality agenda focusses on how traditional aid models have reinforced skewed power dynamics between global north and global south development actors, favouring decision-making power in the hands of those in the global north. The decoloniality agenda argues for more equitable and balanced partnerships as well as inclusive

processes of decision-making (Mignolo 2011; Mignolo & Walsch, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Escobar, 1995).

Critics, however, argue that focussing on power redistribution may ultimately undermine the effectiveness and efficiency of development programs and aid as multi-level decision-making processes may decelerate the implementation of these processes (Moyo, 2009). Dambisa Moyo argues that the focus on power redistribution will in fact uphold aid dependency and maintains that focus on economic pathways through trade, investments and market-based solutions, should be prioritised in international development. Additionally, critics of decoloniality spotlight the value of western technological expertise and (project-management) know-how in international development work (Collier, 2007). Dreher et. al. (2021) argue that redistribution of power may ultimately also fuel practices of corruption and mismanagement in global south development contexts. A more nuanced critique has been presented by Easterly (2006) who argues that instead of focussing on sudden power redistribution, we must first focus on local capacity-building as a stepping stone. He calls for a more gradual redistribution of (decision-making) power so as to allow time to strengthen the capabilities of local institutions to carry their own development sector.

Engaging with these critiques, Escobar (1995), Cornwall (2007) and Tuck & Yang (2012) attempt to rebut these arguments as they highlight that redistribution of power does not in fact have the impact efficiency and effectiveness of development programs. Involving local perspectives more in decision-making processes may ultimately lead to more sustainable and successful outcomes as they trigger a sense of ownership in local communities. They argue that more equitable relationships may ultimately result in more transparency and accountability as relationships of trust are fostered, rather than that of the current 'policing' nature by development actors in the global north.

- **Knowledge production and epistemic justice** – the decoloniality agenda aims to spotlight how contemporary development practice is rooted in western epistemological knowledge systems, and so often undermine and/or overrule local systems of knowledge (production). Debates within decoloniality of aid

revolve around finding ways to dismantle these systems and promote diverse pathways to knowledge production and call for epistemic justice (Mignolo, 2011; Smith, 1999; Santos, 2014).

One of the main critiques presented against giving a platform to voices and knowledge production rooted in the global south is that this prioritisation should not be dependent on identity or group membership but rather on merit, expertise and qualifications (Mignolo 2013). Additionally, Cross (2013) warns for epistemic relativism, emphasising that not all knowledge should be valued equally and that this docket on the decoloniality agenda may hinder critical evaluation and ultimately affect the effectiveness of aid interventions.

Decolonial theorists such as Smith (2012) and Maldonado-Torres (2007), however, rebut such critiques as they argue that the validity of knowledge production must not only be dependent on expertise and qualifications. They question how and by who these qualifications are valued and emphasise that reimagining knowledge production systems is not just an intellectual practice but rather a call for transformative praxis. Every action that challenges the dominant western-centred knowledge systems can so be considered a valuable one, in and of itself.

- **Ownership and localisation** – another debate the decoloniality of aid agenda pushes forward is that of ownership of local development agendas and localisation of decision-making power. It emphasises the need for development actors in the global south to have control over their own paths to sustainable development rather than being passive recipients of aid, conforming to the paths outlined by global north development actors. Doing so will require a shift in decision-making power (over resources) to local communities, (non-governmental) organisations and governments (Cornwall, 2007; Escobar, 1995; Smith, 1999; Esteva, 1998).

Opponents of the promotion of localisation and ownership of local developments in the school of decoloniality of aid emphasise that ultimately the currently dominant development actors in the global north may be more effective in

addressing the global south development agenda. These actors are considered to be more likely to remain neutral and impartial in addressing local issues as well as carry along the experience, know-how and resources to do so (Fisher, 2015; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). Another argument that is presented is that international NGOs tend to have a better understanding of global/international relations and contexts, allowing them to navigate complicated political and social contexts, to build bridges between global and local contexts and enabling them to allocate resources most efficiently (Barnett & Weiss, 2011).

Building on the work of Escobar (1995) and Mignolo (2011), however, proponents of this agenda argue that superiority of knowledge, experience and expertise of global north development actors must not be a justification for privileging it. They emphasise that this is exactly what the decoloniality agenda must disempower through facilitating local capacity-building (through training, resources and mentorship) as well as revaluing local knowledge systems through Escobar's lens of 'pluriversality' for their own characteristics rather than measuring them against the western qualifications and standards. Additionally, decolonial theorists such as Escobar and Esteva (2017) as well as Smith (1999) essentially highlight that INGOs too cannot be considered impartial and neutral as they themselves are a product of cultural biases and colonial legacies. Global north development actors may ultimately prioritise their own interpretation of the global development agenda over the needs and aspirations of local communities (Mohanty, 2003). Decolonial theorists essentially argue that localisation and ownership may present opportunities for increased transparency, accountability, agency and autonomy among local development actors.

- **Reimagining development paradigms** – a final discussion that is pushed forward within the decoloniality of aid agenda is that of reimagining the concept of 'development'. Decolonial theorists argue for a shift away from linear, modernist, western-centred ideas and interpretations of the concept (focussed on economic growth). They call for a revaluation of development, conforming to local contexts, beliefs and values in the global south (Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Sen, 1999). Reimagining these paradigms requires also critically rewriting narratives and

reshaping representation in the development sector that currently fuel ideas of 'white saviourism' (Escobar, 1995).

Some of the main critiques surrounding this key theme of the decoloniality of aid agenda emphasise that reimagining development paradigms away from narratives of economic growth is an idyllic illusion as it remains to be the prerequisite for development (Easterly, 2001). Such critics highlight the importance of key indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in order to determine the developmental progress of a country. According to these theorists, the focus should be on making traditional aid models more effective rather than moving away from an agenda focussed on economic growth all together (Easterly, 2001; Easterly, 2006). Jeffrey Sachs (2015) presents a bit more nuanced argumentation as he does emphasise the needed focus on economic growth, but also highlights the importance of environmental, health and social development and well-being.

Other decolonial theorists, however, rebut such arguments emphasising that economic indicators alone, such as GDP, are not sufficient in outlining a country's developmental progress as they do not take social and environmental dimensions of well-being into consideration. They argue that maintaining focus in economic growth will reinforce inequality and marginalisation (UNDP, 2016). In order to really facilitate inclusive development, the power imbalances underlying economic imbalances must be addressed, as the school of decoloniality aims to do (Escobar, 1995; Mohanty, 2003)

Above, the key themes and debates on the agenda for decoloniality in international development work have been discussed and some of lines of critique have shortly been touched upon. One of the major critiques on the school of decoloniality as a whole, however, is that, while it has been pushed forward by academics in the global south, in its translation from theory into praxis, it has mostly been taken up by global north development actors, finding very little traction in the global south (Mawdsley, 2012). Several decoloniality theorists have argued that this largely western-centric adoption of the decoloniality agenda can be allocated to these very power dynamics it tries to combat. More specifically, financial structures of dependence between those global north and

global south development actors are highlighted as a source for its one-sided implementation (Mawdsley, 2012; Hickel, 2017; Amanor, 2009; Rapley, 2017; Moyo, 2009). The want and/or need of global south development actors for financial resources provided by global north development actors, so functions as an obstacle in addressing power imbalances and getting critically involved in the discussions and debates as outlined above. Financial independence is so presented as an essential stepping stone in achieving decoloniality of aid. Without it, global south actors may continue to feel hindered in engaging with the decoloniality of aid agenda and the movement will remain to be a one-sided, western-fuelled one; beckoning the critical question to what extent a transformation targeting colonised power dynamics can survive if it is only carried by the ‘colonising’ forces.

2.4 The main actors on stage

Considering the outlined debates, this research project specifically looks into the extent to which financial independence indeed functions as a catalyser for the agenda for decoloniality of aid. One issue important to define and outline is the financial relationships that greatly influence these relations. The overview presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) for ‘tracking development cooperation through international institutions using statistics of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), an international forum involving the largest providers of aid worldwide’, may offer a solid base to do so (see figure 3).

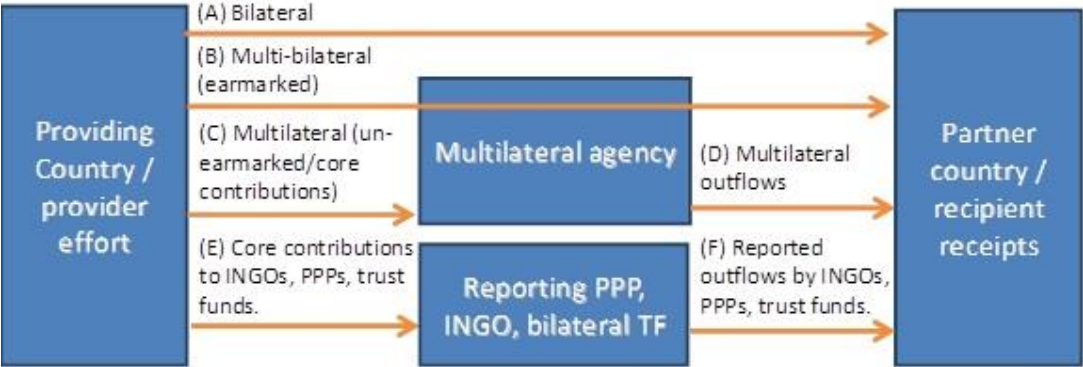


Figure 3: Methodological note on tracking development co-operation through international institutions in DAC Statistics (OECD, 2023a).

In evaluating the funding streams received by partner countries/recipients, the OECD distinguishes between three main groups of actors: bilateral actors, multilateral actors and a collective of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and bilateral Trust Funds (TF). Bilateral actors are identified as “flows from official (government) sources directly to the recipient country” (OECD, 2023b). Multilateral aid “represents core contributions from official (government) sources to multilateral agencies which use them to fund their own developmental programmes. Multilateral agencies, such as United Nations agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are governed by representatives of governments, unlike non-governmental organisations (NGOs)” (OECD, 2023b). The last group include individual actors providing aid that may receive grants from political institutions but are not governed by them. The recipients in partner countries may include both, governmental and/or non-governmental institutions. The recipient receipts are a product of $A + B + D + F$ in which only the outflows of multilateral agencies and the non-governmental collective are taken into consideration, excluding the core funding that has been raised for their own operations.

Many of the debates surrounding financial dependency in the decoloniality agenda do not touch upon the explicit distinctions between types of funding streams but focus rather on the financial dependency of recipient countries on bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental actors as a whole. In focussing on these relationships of dependency, decoloniality theory does resemble dependency theory as presented in the sixties. However, unlike dependency theory it does not focus on and engage with economic relations and the global capitalist system as the pathway towards development, but rather critiques the political, social and cultural dimensions of aid lying underneath these relations, considering economic dimensions mostly as having a facilitating or obstructing function. So, with the lack on emphasis on the financial implications of these debates, this thesis contributes to the discussion by looking into the case study of Ghana, who quite unexpectedly got to test the implications of financial independence. Especially the discussion around ownership and localisation is important in relation to Ghana’s case study. While the other debates presented above do remain relevant, Kumi’s (2017) work has outlined that, considering these various debates, Ghanaian NGDOs have most explicitly made efforts in achieving localisation and ownership since the WB reclassification. Therefore, Ghana’s case study lends itself perfectly to the analysis of the extent to which the expected results of financial independence pushed forward in this

core debate are indeed achieved. Providing further insight into these various discussions promoted by decoloniality scholars, this chapter has offered a theoretical framework against which the results of this research can be compared and contrasted as it investigates to what extent financial independence indeed facilitates (or hinders) decoloniality of (the Ghanaian) aid (sector). As the decoloniality of aid agenda is now mostly pushed forward by global north development actors, such as bilateral, multi-lateral and non-governmental donors, it is important to spotlight the voices in recipient countries. Therefore, this research has focussed on the perspectives of Ghanaian NGDO development practitioners and experts on the applicability of the decoloniality agenda in their own (professional) context. Before highlighting their lived experiences, it is important to first set the stage as to how 'decoloniality of aid' relates to the Ghanaian context.

3. Capturing the Ghanaian context

While decoloniality theory emerged from African and Latin-American academics, in its translation to contemporary development practice it seems that the decoloniality movement has been mostly taken on and pushed forward by development actors in the global north (Chanase, 2021; Mawdsley, 2012). However, when zooming in on Ghana's history of aid and development, we may trace back a longer desire for independence and decoloniality of aid, reaching back decades. This chapter aims to outline how decoloniality of aid relates to the context of the Ghanaian aid sector. It illustrates the long-felt desire for independence, spotlighting how it, in line with its history, may prove to be fertile ground for the transformative call of decoloniality of aid.

This chapter further highlights the growing influence of multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organisations in Ghana's development, and how the Ghanaian government has continued to strive towards development as defined by these actors (measured against the World Bank's classification system).

3.1 Ghana's (de)colonial foundation

Starting in the fifteenth century, Ghana was a colonised region as part of the Gold Coast under the rule of the Portuguese, British and Dutch. While it was a central hub for the slave trade import and export for centuries, later it became a main source for the export of raw materials to European countries. The decades following British colonisation of the Ashanti were characterised by economic and social developments within the colony. Through the introduction of the cocoa crops, poverty levels fell significantly, and national incomes rose due to increased export of its resources such as gold and timber. Through the entrance of the British education system, introduced by missionaries, Ghana soon became the most well-educated, richest region along the Gold coast, and a Ghanaian elite was soon formed (McLaughing & Owusu-Ansah, 1995).

At the beginning of the twentieth century a growing sense of nationalism and discontent with British governance structures emerged from within this group of educated elites. Giving in to growing discontent and unrest in the colonies that were seen as an essential source of raw materials for their own economic growth, the British government released The New Gold Coast Constitution March 29 1946, in which the British majority rule was abandoned for the first time (McLaughing & Owusu-Ansah, 1995). While this constitution was welcomed with open arms, it was unable to prevent further unrest during the

following decade as many Ghanaian veterans came home from fighting for the British during the second world war to a country that was marked by shortages, inflation, unemployment and a housing crisis.

In 1947, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was founded by the educated Ghanaian elite, also known as The Big Six, as the first nationalist movement calling for a self-steering government, independent from the British as soon as possible. This marked the start of a decade of nationalist movements fuelled by various political groups, each calling for more radical change. The Convention's People Party (CPP), founded in 1949 and branched out of the UGCC, disapproved UGCC's approach in negotiating a new constitution with the British, and called for 'self-governance now' (McLaughing & Owusu-Ansah, 1995). In the following years, the CPP gained political ground, led by Kwame Nkrumah who became the leader of the party, to later become Ghana's first prime minister in 1952. Nkrumah, and the CPP were rigorously opposed in the years that followed by various political groups, most significantly after the 1954 elections when the National Liberation Movement (NLM) was formed and painted the CPP as a dictatorial party, allied by the Northern People's Party (NPP). However, the CPP remained supported by the British (constitutional advisor), who agreed to grant independence if a 'reasonable majority' of the new legislature petitioned this request. In new elections in 1956, this majority was acquired after which 1957 was determined to be the year to mark British exit from their colony and Ghana was formed as a nation-state (McLaughing & Owusu-Ansah, 1995).

Nkrumah strongly believed in the liberation and unification of Africa in order to achieve true self-determination and independence for African countries. He argued that the unity of Africa was the essential key to dismantling the imperialist and neo-colonial structures. This was very much visible in his political career as he supported various liberation movements and founded the Pan-Africanist All-African People's Revolutionary Party (A-APRP). Through logistic and financial support for independence movements in other African nations, Nkrumah's thoughts and actions greatly influenced the Pan-Africanist movement on which the Black Consciousness movement was later built (A-PRP, 2023). During the era of actual decolonisation (as in independence) already, Ghana's first president, Nkrumah verbalised and embodied the foundation of the country's desire for independence of its western colonisers, an agenda that in the present times and terminology could be called decoloniality.

3.2 Aid in Ghana

While Nkrumah paved the way for the exit of Ghana's political colonisers, about a decade later, new (multilateral) actors from the global north entered the country, through economic doors rather than political ones.

Soon after Ghana became independent from the United Kingdom, the cocoa-price collapsed, disrupting a large part of the country's economic foundation and stability. The coup of 1966, overthrowing Nkrumah's reign, inherited a country with high amounts of debt, currency overvaluation and weak commodity demand. During the seventies, cocoa production halved bringing Ghana down from a 1/3th share of the world market, to a 1/8th share. During this decade, the country's GDP per capita remained negative 3.2% annually on average (LaVerle Bennette, 1994). As the production of minerals, gold, manganese, bauxite and diamonds also decreased, combined with annual average inflation of 50% between 1976 and 1981, Ghana's economy found itself in an advanced stage of collapse mid-eighties (LaVerle Bennette, 1994).

A growing demand for state-provided social and economic welfare services led the Government of Ghana to knock on the door of multilateral agencies requesting Official Development Aid (ODA) to address these crises.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Capital Inflows									
ODA	110	258	224	358	437	499	569	629	622
Medium-term debt	114	170	153	133	109	118	56	51	35
IMF	340	218	124	38	149	210	188	131	62
Payments									
Debt	125	115	248	251	182	208	184	123	122
Interest	82	101	106	105	126	142	115	106	105
IMF	16	4	0	22	174	255	184	111	66
Arrears	0	208	57	4	71	30	45	25	0
Net Position	341	218	90	147	142	192	285	446	426

SOURCES : World Bank, *African Economic and Financial Data* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1989); Ghana, *Towards a New Dynamism: Report Prepared by the Government of Ghana for the Fifth Meeting of the Consultative Group for Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1989), 30; and private communication from the Ministry of Finance.

Table 1: Aid flows received by the Government of Ghana between 1983 and 1991 in millions US\$ (Herbst, 1993).

As can be seen in table 1, the amount received in ODA by the Government of Ghana increased significantly during the eighties, while it must be noted that part of new annual ODA was used to repay old loans to the World Bank, IMF and other multilateral agencies (Herbst, 1993). This ODA, however, did not come freely and was often contingent upon particular requirements and conditions. Some of the main conditions that were imposed through ODA were through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) which outlined policies that were directed at restructuring the economy through liberalisation measurements. In line with modernisation theory, dominant in international development praxis at the time, multilateral agencies saw the implementation of western practice and policies as a pathway towards economic development for Ghana. The policies attached to this funding required (World Bank, 1989; Riddell, 1992; Nsouli, 1989):

- Privatisation and deregulation of state-owned operations and a reduction of government intervention in the country's economy. This needed to be done through restraining bureaucratic red tape, encouraging private investment and selling state-owned assets.
- The adoption of economic policy reforms that prioritised macroeconomic stability and market-oriented policies. Doing so required the government to manage inflation, limit budget shortages and enhance the efficiency of governmental institutions.
- Trade liberalisation through the reduction of import tariffs, eliminating trade barriers and supporting export-friendly industries. Through these measurements, Ghana was encouraged to increasingly participate in the global market.
- Institutional reforms focussed on promoting accountability and transparency of governance structures. The Government of Ghana was expected to actively combat corruption, strengthen its governance institutions and build a solid legal and regulatory basis for its governance institutions.

In short, the Structural Adjustment Programs attached to Official Development Aid actively steered the Government of Ghana toward (trade) liberalisation and required an intense roll-back of state functions to open up the market. While the role of the GoG diminished under the pressure of Bretton Wood institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the power and influence of large International Non-Governmental Organisations grew.

As international development work became increasingly politicised in the early nineties, the New Policy Agenda emerged. In line with the shift from classic development theory toward dependency theory and structuralism, this agenda highlighted 'failure of governance' as the source of chronic underdevelopment in poorer countries, rather than 'backwardness' of the failure to adopt western technologies, knowledge and practices as outlined by modernisation theory. (Carothers & Gramont, 2013). From this moment on, major aid organisations took on political goals as well as socioeconomic endeavours marking the shift in power from government institutions to the growth of the Ghanaian Non-Governmental sector (Opokuh-Mensah et. al., 2007). Such political goals included (international) advocacy and lobbying to promote specific agendas (e.g. human rights, social justice, legal changes, etc.), social and political empowerment programs (e.g. through training, capacity-building programs and support in engaging in political processes) and monitoring functions over government policies, actions and programs to promote accountability and transparency.

As the role of the state declined, Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs) were considered the most competent institutions to fill the growing gap between supply and demand of public services (Gary, 1996). Multi-lateral donors, such as Bretton Wood institutions, called for increased collaboration with and funding for these NGDOs, so fuelling the rise of the development sector within Ghana. Especially after the establishment of a stable, democratic government in 1989, Ghana experienced a strong influx of foreign aid funds. Through decentralisation, local governments, previously little autonomous from the central government, increased their collaboration with and reliance on NGDOs (Bawole, 2013). This illustrates how, while the Ghanaian government desired political dependence from its colonisers half a century ago, it welcomed multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental actors offering economic support and guidance. Through this economic support, in the form of ODA, western measurements and standards for development and progress were introduced in the Ghanaian context; at first perhaps as an external measuring instrument, but soon also adopted by the Ghanaian government itself as, in 1995, they presented their 2020 vision, outlining its goal to be a middle-income country by the standards of the World Bank (GoG, 1995).

3.3 The reclassification and Ghana Beyond Aid

While the role and influence of INGOs in providing public services to the Ghanaian people grew, governmental policy, as outlined in Ghana's 2020 vision released by the government in 1995, remained highly focussed on Ghana's economic development in relation to global capitalist markets. In line with the SAPs pushed forward by the classic development agenda, the pathways to reach this goal focussed on macro-economic stability, agricultural reforms and modernisation, trade reforms through eliminating barriers and lowering tariffs and public sector reforms centred around increasing efficiency and budget constraints, as exactly this jargon was used in the government's 2020 vision (GoG, 1995). While academic discourse on post-development theory grew, it did not yet find its translation and implementation into mainstream development practice in the Ghanaian aid sector. During the nineties, it remained highly characterised by classic development theory focussing on linear economic growth and the adoption of western practice and knowledge as pathways towards the country's development.

In November 2010, a decade earlier than aimed for by its government, Ghana was recategorized by the World Bank as a lower-middle income country (LMIC) as its GDP rose by 60% after an upward revision. World Bank Chief Economist for Africa, Shantayanan Devarajan (2013), explained that this revision was a result of the transit from the System of National Accounts used since 1963 to the revised system of 1993 as a new base year. While this is true, the significant increase in the rise in GDP can also be largely allocated to updated data and a rebasing of the weight of various sectors in their contribution to the country's GDP. Jerven and Duncan (2012) grouped the changes that were implemented in the rebasing practice in the following categories: "a) change in conceptual treatment; b) change in methodology; c) improvements and revisions in data sources; and d) updating classification" (p. 16). They argue that "while the first two receive considerable attention in national accounting manuals and handbooks for Ghana, it was the availability of new data that mattered" (p. 16). This new data did not only show an expansion over all sectors but also highlighted a significant previous underestimation of the services sector, as shown in table 2.

Year	Old series			New series (rebased)		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services
	%	%				
2006	38.8	28.3	32.9	30.4	20.8	48.8
2007	37.6	28.2	34.2	29.1	20.7	50.2
2008	37.0	28.3	34.7	31.0	20.4	48.6
2009	37.7	27.2	35.1	31.7	18.9	49.5
2010*	35.6	28.3	36.1	30.2	18.6	51.1

Table 2: Percentage share of Ghana's GDP, by sector from 2006 to 2010 (Jerven & Duncan, 2012).

Additionally, around the time of the reclassification, Ghana became an oil producer. As an off-shore oil stream was discovered in 2007, commercial production commenced at the end of 2010. While revenues acquired from such activities are often not taken up in international categorisations, they are generally considered 'unearned income' that donors may in fact weigh as they make resource allocation decisions (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012). As shown in figure 4, oil production has become a significant part of Ghana's economy over the last decade, resulting in a revenue stream of US\$ 490 million in 2021.

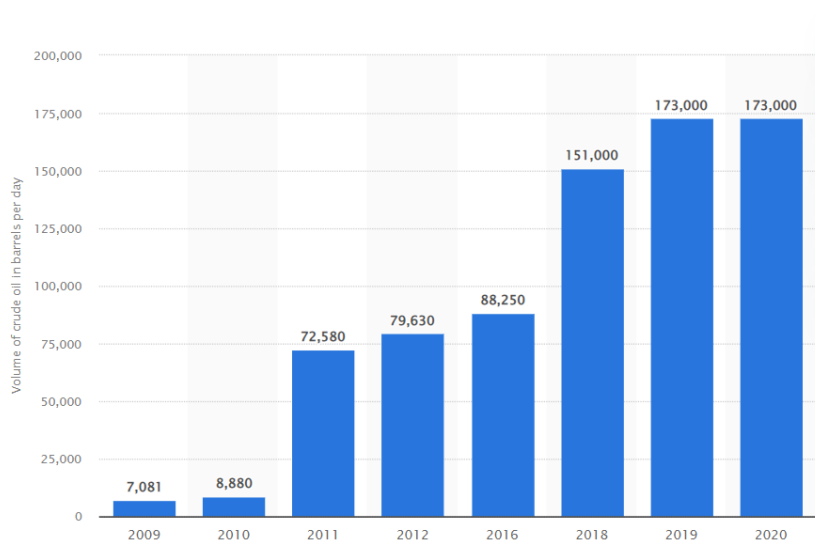


Figure 4: Volume of crude oil produced in Ghana, in barrels per day (Statista, 2022).

All together the World Bank's rebasing exercise led to an increase of Ghana's GDP by 60%, as shown in figure 5, ultimately resulting in the country's reclassification in 2010 from a low-income country to a lower-middle income country.

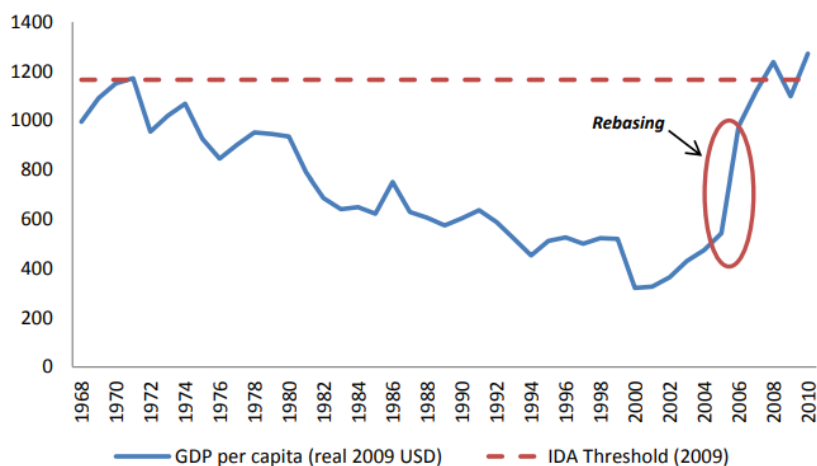


Figure 5: GDP per capita in Ghana against the International Development Association (IDA) threshold (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012).

This impacted Ghana in many ways, not in the least its development sector. As many larger International Non-Government Organisations use the World Bank’s classification system as a system to determine where to allocated their funds to, Ghana’s reclassification triggered a sudden efflux of these foreign aid funds out of the country. Between 2010 and 2020, these foreign aid funds halved from \$ 1.8 billion to \$ 0.9 billion as can be seen in figure 6 (The sudden peak in 2015 can be explained by a one-time debt service provided by the International Monetary Fund).

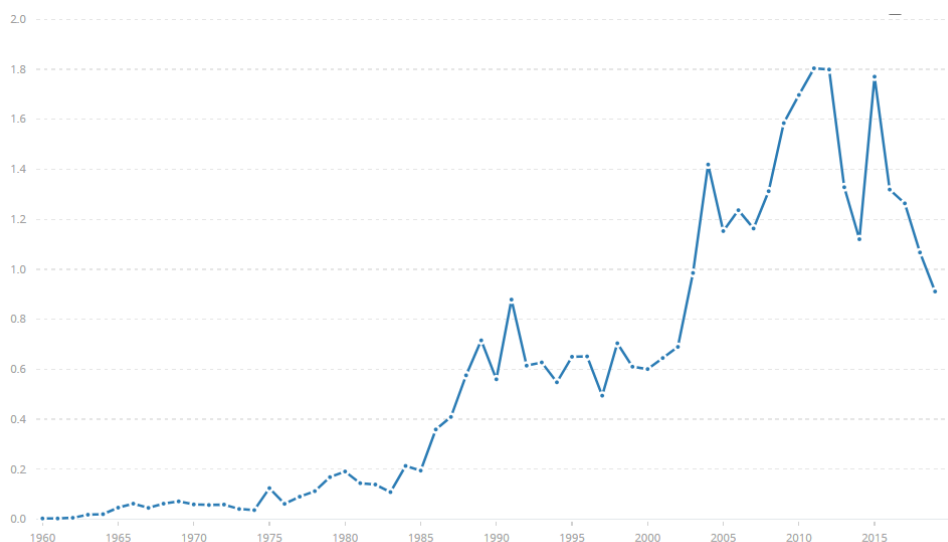


Figure 6: Net official development assistance and official aid received in US\$ billion – Ghana (World Bank, 2019).

The sudden efflux of foreign aid funds challenged the estimated 6500 Ghanaian NGOs to find alternative resource mobilisation strategies (Chanase, 2021). Emmanuel Kumi (2017) has researched and outlined the various strategies employed, outlining the following main domestic resources: volunteer support, individual donations, commercial activities, corporate philanthropy and government funding. He illustrates how NGOs are increasingly adopting income diversification strategies to address the sudden funding challenge, often choosing two or three of these alternative mobilisation strategies presented. While Kumi's work discusses the main alternative resource mobilisation strategies employed by Ghanaian NGOs and addresses potential challenges of these strategies, it does not, however, elaborate on their effectiveness. As it remains unsure to what extent these strategies have become viable sources to carry NGO operations, it then becomes important to question whether they have indeed proven to be the longed-for bridges towards a financially independent Ghanaian development sector.

To outline a final significant development in the Ghanaian aid sector, we move almost a decade ahead beyond the WB reclassification. In 2019, the Government of Ghana published its new vision on development: "Ghana Beyond Aid" (GhBA). In this charter, Ghana is portrayed as a young country with a plethora of resources and riches. Prevailing poverty is allotted to persistent mismanagement, corruption and peaking fiscal deficits as a result of foreign aid and borrowing (Government of Ghana, 2019). Focussing on a future in which Ghana is not reliant anymore on foreign aid funds, the agenda emphasised however, that "Ghana Beyond Aid" (GhBA) is not about rejecting aid altogether but rather about "transforming and growing out of dependence on aid" (Government of Ghana, 2019). The government determined a strategy for economic transformation with which any international aid and assistance is to align. Through the publication of the Ghana Beyond Aid charter, it becomes clear that half a century after its political independence and more than two decades after its original Ghana 2020 vision, governmental policy is still aimed at independence of global north governmental and non-governmental actors.

As this context chapter has highlighted, while the contemporary movement calling for decoloniality (of aid) is often considered a recent, western-driven one, when we look at Ghana, we can trace back a deeply rooted desire for and political focus on independence from global north development actors. While subjecting itself to the SAPs introduced through Official Development Aid, the government outlined a path towards development,

aiming for a revised status as a lower-middle income country. Obtaining this reclassification, a decade earlier than expected, it significantly impacted the Ghanaian Non-Governmental sector as it triggered a strong efflux of foreign aid by bilateral partners and INGOs. As several decolonial theorists present financial independence as an essential stepping stone to achieve decoloniality of aid, Ghana's reclassification offers an excellent case study to further analyse to what extent financial independence indeed allows for further introduction of the decoloniality agenda in a context that seems to intrinsically desire this very independence.

As this chapter has outlined, it is clear that classification systems, such as that of the World Bank, have become the driving force behind financial resource allocation decision-making by bilateral and multilateral development actors as well as most large INGOs. Therefore, it is important to investigate to what extent such multilateral classification systems facilitate the long-felt desire for independence by global south states from global north (development) actors. Do they indeed pave the way for the contemporary decoloniality of aid agenda that is increasingly pushed forward by scholars and development actors in the global north to root in the global south? Zooming in on Ghana's case study, has the reclassification indeed proven to be the jumping board for the government's desire and hope for a future Ghana Beyond Aid? Kumi (2017) highlighted various employed alternative resource mobilisation strategies employed by Ghanaian NGOs to address this changing aid landscape. However, little attention has been given to the lived experiences of the reclassification's effects by Ghanaian development practitioners in the field themselves, the experienced effectiveness of these alternative resource mobilisation strategies and the extent to which they feel the reclassification has ultimately promoted (the desired) decoloniality of the Ghanaian aid sector; which is where we move next after first discussing methodology.

4. Methodology

The following chapter outlines the research methodologies adopted to reach the research objectives. In doing so, the research design, data collection, methods of analysis and limitations of the chosen design will be discussed.

4.1 Research design

In order to discuss to what extent financial independence has indeed proven to be a catalyser for decoloniality within the Ghanaian aid sector, the following research question was presented:

To what extent has Ghana's reclassification to a middle-income country contributed to the decoloniality of aid among Ghanaian Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs)?

The following sub-questions served to answer the main research question posed above:

- 1. How has the financial dependence of Ghanaian NGDOs on global north development actors changed since 2010 according to local development practitioners?*
- 2. How have these changes impacted power dynamics between Ghanaian NGDOs and development actors in the global north?*
- 3. What value is attached to the experienced consequences of these changes by local development practitioners?*

The first sub-question serves the purpose of specifically outlining any changes in financial dependency since 2010, serving as a foundation to determine whether changes in financial dependence have indeed triggered changes in power dynamics between development actors. Once this assumption has been either confirmed or denied, sub-question two further explores any changes in relational power dynamics by zooming in on decision-making practices in project development as well as monitoring and evaluation. Finally, the third sub-question aims to outline the value that is attached to these financial and relational changes by development practitioners and experts in the global south. The answers to these sub-questions so offer a basis for the discussion in chapter six about the extent to which (involuntary) financial dependence, through the desired WB reclassification, has triggered the adoption of the decoloniality of aid agenda by global south development actors, such as those in Ghana. It may fuel a further discussion about whether this has contributed to the country's long-felt desire for

independence from global north (development) actors and experienced as a valuable development.

To address these research questions, the design of this research was subdivided into three stages. During the first stage of the research, preparatory research was conducted. This was done in the form of desk research as well as some explorative conversations with several experts on the topic of decoloniality of aid and/or the most pressing issues in the Ghanaian aid sector. During this period, the research topic was narrowed down through the construction of a theoretical framework, formulation of research questions and development of a research strategy as well as an interview protocol. As the goal of this research was to highlight the lived experiences of practitioners and experts in the field, a qualitative case study was adopted as research methodology. Since the form of case study as a research method is grounded in lived reality, it allows analysis of complex inter-relationships and leaves room for the 'exploration of the unexpected and unusual' (Hodkinson, P. & Hodkinson, H., 2001; Yin, 2003). The second stage of this research consisted of the data collection phase which was marked by the conduct of 17 interviews as well as their transcriptions. Due to my physical/medical restraints, the recruitment as well as the conducting of interviews was done online. During the final stage, the interviews were coded, the data analysed and conclusions were drawn and presented in the form of this master thesis.

4.2 Data collection

To achieve said research goals, a qualitative data collection method was adopted in the form of semi-structured interview. A topic list was developed based on the structure of the sub-questions supporting the main research question as outlined in this report, which was then peer-reviewed. In preparation of each interview, background research on the interviewee as well as the organisation which they represented (if applicable) and the topic list was adjusted accordingly to be able to zoom in on their particular expertise and experience. The topic list supported the following key topics, focussing on the changes in each of these areas compared to 2010:

- Financial (in)dependence
- Perception of power dynamics
- Changes in project management practices focussing on
 - Needs identification
 - Agenda setting

- Beneficiary and staff selection processes
- Development of project content
- Monitoring and evaluation
- The gender equality agenda
- Ghana beyond aid

These topics were chosen to further prompt interviewees about the key themes presented by the decoloniality of aid agenda, focussing on: power and representation dynamics, knowledge production (and implementation), ownership and localisation and development paradigms underlying strategic decision-making processes in NGOs.

As the entirety of the Ghanaian aid sector is too large of a scope for this research, I have focussed on Ghanaian Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs) providing gender programs. In its Ghana Beyond Aid-Vision, released in 2019, the Ghanaian government (2019) made a distinction in the country's development agenda between basic and non-basic services. In this distinction, basic services included those focussed on water & sanitation, education, agricultural practice and health care. Non-basic services are those focussed on gender equality and climate change. Hypothesising that programs providing non-basic services may be more significantly affected by funding cuts (resulting from the reclassification), thus most likely experiencing the most significant changes compared to 2010, the focus was put on NGOs providing gender equality programs. As has been noted before, however, Ghanaian NGOs tend to be characterised by their lack of thematic focus. Therefore, NGOs providing gender equality programs most likely also offer other basic and non-basic services.

Due to my physical restraints, as advised by research experts Nalita James & Hugh Busher (2016), the interviewees were identified through purposive and convenience sampling and later through snowball sampling. Interviewees were first approached through e-mail, phone calls, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Facebook, depending on the contact information available online. At the end of each interview, I asked the interviewee whether they could offer referrals to other potential interviewees that fit the scope of this research. While approaching through e-mail sometimes proved to be a struggle, the response rate was significantly higher when I approached interviewees by phone or when they were referred by people who I had previously spoken to. Especially after explaining why I could not be in Ghana and/or using some word in local dialects, there was a high willingness to assist me in my research.

In addressing the research topic, 17 development practitioners and experts were interviewed. To build rapport with the interviewees and allow them to speak freely, quotes will not be directly linked to the interviewee and/or the organisation. To highlight by who particular quotes were given, a distinction will be made between: small NGOs, average NGOs, gatekeepers, experts and NGO networks.

As emphasised by David Lewis (2001), academic and author in the field of international development, there are no universal methods and criteria for determining a size of an NGO. Classifying them as small, average, etc. may be dependent on various factors such as number of employees, geographical reach, programmatic scope, etc. Therefore, classifications are highly dependent on their given context. Within this particular context the distinction between small and average NGOs has been determined by looking at the amount of employees, small NGOs being those with a maximum of 7 employees, average NGOs being those with 8 or more. Analysing the context studied in this research, while often providing a myriad of services (as Ghanaian NGOs typically do), NGOs with 7 or less employees often focussed on one geographical context. Those with 8 or more employees often expanded, not only the scope of their activities, but often times also their geographical scope. Gatekeepers, a label coined within the context of this research, are those NGOs that have strong connections with western donors, attract large amounts of funding and distinguish themselves from average NGOs in the fact that they often sub-grant funding to small and average-sized NGOs, forming a new intermediary between these NGOs and global north donors. The role of these gatekeepers in the changing power dynamics and Ghanaian aid landscape will be further elaborated on in this chapter. Finally, experts and NGO networks are also separately identified. A detailed overview of the people/organisations interviewed as well as how they are categorised according to the criteria presented above can be found in Appendix A.

4.3 Limitations & opportunities of the research (methodology)

Changing the research methodology from in-person interviews and field observations in Ghana to online interviews at a distance had an important impact on my research and methodological approach. This resulted in several opportunities and limitations.

It has limited the research in as far as the fact that no field observations could be made and I was not able to collect data within the Ghanaian context itself. The fact that all interviews were conducted online may have both, limited and aided the collection of data. As highlighted by Orgad (2005), the online nature of the research may trigger a sense of

anonymity and disembodiment in the interviewee, creating a barrier between the researcher and the interviewee. However, she emphasises that simultaneously, this anonymity may allow interviewees who are naturally shy or more hesitant to speak more freely. Kivits (2005) highlights how providing personal information or having an informal start of the interview may help in building rapport with the interviewee.

In order to address the limitations as highlighted by Orgad, each interviewee was informed prior to the interview and at the start of the interview that any information given is confidential and that specific quotes will not be linked to their name without their explicit consent. In an attempt to establish a basis of trust, I started each interview with some informal conversation, e.g. some words in any of the local dialects, which often broke the ice.

Another limitation is seen in the sampling of the interviewees. Due to the physical limitations, I was only able to approach interviewees through digital means and later on through snowball sampling. Therefore, it must be noted that all organisations and people interviewed have a strong online presence or are considered to be in the close professional network of those who have a strong online presence. Those NGOs that do not fit these characteristics, operating at the fringes of the Ghanaian aid sector as well as those who have not survived the implications of the country's reclassification have not been reached, thus limiting the generalisability of the results of this research to some extent.

The physical limitations of this research have also brought about some opportunities, however. As all interviews were conducted online, I was not bound to travel restrictions to collect data and was able to talk with NGOs operating throughout the entire country. This resulted in more detailed insights into the extreme poverty gap between northern and southern Ghana and ultimately how this has affected the approaches to aid.

Finally, my own positionality as a researcher must be reflected upon as either aiding or obstructing valuable, valid data within the context of this research. As emphasised by Smith (1999) in her work on decolonising methodologies, it is important to reflect on how one's race, gender, age and class may affect data collection as well as interpretation of the data. Being a 25-year-old, white, Dutch girl, my position in relation to interviewees may have affected the information that was provided to me by the interviewees. In several interviews, it became clear that in an aid context subjected to dwindling foreign funding, any connection to funding and/or networks in the global north is seen as an opportunity.

Some interviewees hinted that in return for granting me an interview, I might think of them if I come across any funding possibilities in the Netherlands. Seeing me as another potential source of income may have influenced the data I have collected. On one hand, interviewees may have given as true answers as possible, hoping that in providing me with an honest reflection of their experiences, I may return the favour. On the other hand, it can be argued that in seeing me as a potential source of income, interviewees may have altered their answers according to their idea of what I might want to hear. While it is impossible for me to determine to what extent interviewees may have altered their answers, I have focussed on speaking to development practitioner working in different sizes NGOs, operating in different geographical contexts. Additionally, answers given by one interviewee were questioned in multiple other interviews, asking other interviewees to either confirm or deny what I was told. Only the answers that were given in the majority of the interviews, and were confirmed by other interviewees, have been incorporated of the results chapters of this research paper, excluding any outliers.

All in all, while not all limitations to this research methodology could be prevented, I feel that being aware of and actively reflecting on them has allowed me to treat the data accordingly, being sensitive to these risks as well as my own positionality as a researcher.

4.4 Data analysis

The final stage of the research consisted of data analysis, during which three layers of coding were applied. During the data collection stage, a first general layer of coding was done in order to identify recurring themes, such as (but not limited to):

- Changes in agenda setting processes
- Changes in monitoring and evaluation
- Changes in requirements and conditions attached to funding
- Comments on decoloniality of aid as a movement
- Consortium formation & collaboration
- Changes in influence of donors on project activities
- Ghana Beyond Aid
- Negative/positive effects of the changes in funding as a result of the WB reclassification
- The gender equality agenda
- The shift from service delivery to advocacy programs

These were used as a source for further prompting and the adjustment of the interview protocol to zoom on these recurring themes in further interviews. After all interviews were conducted and transcribed, the transcripts were uploaded into Atlas.ti. and analysed using the codes identified in the first round of coding, and more detailed sub-codes were added as they arose during this analysis of the interviews. For example, the code 'Changes in donor influence on activities' was divided into the following sub-codes:

- Donors are becoming more aware of power dynamics
- Altering activities more to get funding, but we don't mind (willing)
- Altering activities more to get funding, but we would rather not (unwilling)
- Implementation processes have become more labour-intensive
- More focus on co-creation
- Multiple-round grant applications instead of one-step processes
- Requirements and conditions for project activities have become stricter

As some recurring patterns were only identified after a multitude of transcripts were already analysed, and new sub-codes were added, a third round of coding was done to ensure that also those transcripts analysed in the beginning (when these sub-codes were not yet created) were also subjected to the entire set of coding. The code book formed the basis for outlining the main results of this research as it highlighted the themes that recurred in multiple interviews and data that was confirmed by multiple interviewees. The following chapters elaborate on these results.

5. Results

The hypothesis of this research expected that financial independence of Ghanaian NGOs, triggered by the WB reclassification, may create a pathway for them to increasingly engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda. However, perspectives offered by the various NGO practitioners and experts illustrated a very different reality. Their stories outline a changing funding landscape as a result of the WB classification (as well as Ghana Beyond Aid). Studying the Ghanaian gender equality agenda highlights these changes and shows how they have affected the relationships (of power) between the various actors on the Ghanaian development stage. When asked about the value these practitioners and experts attach to these changes, it becomes clear the financial independence, as triggered by the WB reclassification and embraced by the GoG, may not have been the jumping board presented by decolonial theorists. The following chapter outlines the results of the collected data in relation to each of the sub-questions presented in this research paper to create a coherent image of the lived experiences and ultimately address the main research question:

To what extent has Ghana's reclassification to a middle-income country contributed to the decoloniality of aid among Ghanaian Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs)?

5.1 A changing funding landscape

When asked about the changes in financial dependence on global north development actors since 2010, all interviewees confirmed that these were significant and felt at all layers of the Ghanaian aid sector. Besides impacting the funds received by the government, NGO practitioners reported that this efflux of foreign aid funds affected their funding landscape in several ways:

- Funding cuts up to 50% of the budgets they were allocated in 2010
- An increased focus by global north development actors on co-funding (having to provide a part of the budget themselves)
- No more funding was made available for core activities such as rent, salaries, allowances, and other non-project related costs
- Ghana was taken off of many applicability lists for grant proposals, meaning that from one year to the next these NGOs could not apply for the same grants anymore as Ghana was no longer classified as a LIC

This posed the approximately 6500 Ghanaian NGOs for a significant and sudden funding challenge and the need to develop alternative resource mobilisation strategies. NGO practitioners confirmed indeed what Emmanuel Kumi's research in 2017 suggested as alternative resource mobilisation strategies: volunteer support, individual donations, commercial activities, corporate philanthropy and government funding. Most NGOs focussed on one or two of these strategies in particular. This research may contribute to Kumi's work as individual donations could be further specified into several sub-categories that were highlighted by interviewees. One important distinction to be made is between financial and non-financial contributions. Several interviewees highlighted that they increasingly ask recipient communities to contribute in-kind with their time and/or resources. Several NGO practitioners also highlighted that in focussing on domestic individual donations, they do not only target the Ghanaian public living in Ghana but also view the Ghanaian diaspora as a large untapped source of funding and support.

As highlighted by one expert, the changes in the financial landscape of the Ghanaian sector sparked a conversation about sustainability and domestic resource mobilisation that was previously difficult to have:

“So when the funding started to dwindle, then they (NGOs) were forced to think about how they could actually continue to sustain their programmes. Especially getting towards 2014-2016, conversations started about issues of resilience and stability. And those kind of conversations were not very popular conversations before 2010 at all. You raised those conversations then nobody was really listening cause at that time I think there was just an impression that the money will always be there, you know?” (Expert; March 13, 2023)

However, while this research confirms Kumi's work outlining Ghanaian NGO's domestic alternative resource mobilisation strategies, Kumi emphasised that his work was merely descriptive and in no way indicative of the effectiveness of these strategies. Six years after Kumi's research, Ghanaian NGO practitioners as well as experts on the topic explain that the effectiveness of these strategies remains very limited and are not nearly fruitful enough to financially depend upon. The reason given for this is not necessarily a supposed inability of local philanthropy by Ghanaians resulting from their own economic hardships. It has been repeatedly emphasised that Ghana has a long history of philanthropic giving. However, it also knows deeply rooted perceptions and expectations of Ghanaian NGOs. Therefore, the limited effectiveness of these alternative resource mobilisation strategies is rather allocated to societal and attitudinal stigma's underpinning the Ghanaian aid

sector. Practitioners and experts explain that the (international) NGOs, that filled the developmental vacuum created through the rollback of the state as a result of the SAPs, were from their very emergence always funded by global north development actors. Therefore, the Ghanaian public knows no other reality than that Ghanaian NGOs function as intermediaries channelling western funds to aid local communities. Attempts to shift this deeply rooted societal narrative to one in which NGOs now call on the Ghanaian public for funding prove to be very difficult and little fruitful.

“I think it needs a lot of time for us to go through the process to engage them (the Ghanaian people), to have a shift in the mindset that will change the perception that NGOs used to get money from international organisations is no longer really the case because attention has been shifted to other areas other than Ghana” (Average NGDO; February 2, 2023)

Whereas the statistical data and previous research may indeed have suggested that the World Bank’s reclassification, which was long aimed for by the Ghanaian government, triggered a certain financial independence among NGOs, development practitioners outline a reality that is very different. They explain that while NGOs were indeed triggered to think more critically about a sustainable future and finding domestic funding resources, for none of the interviewed organisations these have become viable sources of income. All organisations interviewed stated that they were still reliant on foreign funding sources for their survival. Experts and NGO networks confirmed that this is the case for most Ghanaian NGOs.

While the reclassification was indeed long desired and aimed for by the Ghanaian government, outlined in their 2020 vision, as it was reached a decade earlier than planned, many NGO practitioners feel that the prosperity and development that is suggested by the WB reclassification does not reflect the reality on the ground.

“As people who are working in the sector, and we work directly with the people at the community level, we realise that there are still a myriad of challenges faced by communities, especially economic wise, that sometimes we were wondering what were some of the criteria so indicators that's went into the decision to make Ghana a middle income country” (Average NGDO; February 2, 2023).

An expert explains that indeed, the reclassification may not justifiably reflect the real development of Ghana as a country as it takes the Gross Domestic Product of a country into consideration. By doing so, it includes large amounts of capital that are indeed within the geographical borders of Ghana, but are not in the hands of the Ghanaians themselves:

“So if you look at the trajectory, it does appear that the reclassification of Ghana as a lower middle income economy is a more data driven event, because looking at the size of the Ghanaian economy, it is foreign capital dominated. Because if you look at our mining sector, our oil sector that is evolving, it is largely foreign companies that have almost all the shares. If you look at our cocoa sector, it is supposed to be indigenous but the capital that is funding it is largely foreign. So we have an economic model and system that is foreign, yet the foreign investment is computed to jack up the economy and then reclassify it as a lower middle income economy, but the real capital that runs the economy is not in the hands of the locals, it is in the hands of foreigners and when they repatriate, the capital plummets, it falls” (Expert; March 17, 2023).

The same expert highlighted that this is why the Gross National Product (GNP) should rather be evaluated correctly evaluate a country’s (economic) development, rather than its GDP, excluding foreign financial capital within the country’s borders.

So while Ghana’s government actively strived for the country’s reclassification, it was a sudden surprise for many NGOs who especially felt that this classification did not necessarily correctly reflect the reality seen on the ground. Regardless of the extent to which the WB classification reflects the real development correctly or not, as many large INGOs use this classification system to determine where to allocate their funds to, Ghana’s reclassification triggered a significant efflux of foreign aid funds from the country.

Acknowledging this reality means that we are presented with an aid sector that is still highly dependent on foreign aid funding, but due to its (desired and aimed for) reclassification, is now left with half of its foreign aid funds (as was shown figure 6 in chapter 3.3) and struggling to mobilise local resources to support its aid sector as has been highlighted above. Practitioners and experts report that this has reconfigured the Ghanaian funding arena into an increasingly competitive environment in which a growing amount of NGOs compete for a shrinking amount of funding.

One important consequence of the diminished funding pot, is to determine its allocation over the various organisations, based on grant application procedures that have become more labour- and skill-intensive. Practitioners explain that since 2010, the requirements and conditions attached to funding budgets have become stricter. NDGOs often have to navigate through multiple selection rounds before grants are either rewarded or rejected and being held accountable by increasingly more complicated reporting structures proposed by western donors. More specifically, NGDO practitioners outline how, in contrast to 2010, they are putting an increasing amount of time in developing detailed plannings, budgets, sustainability plans, risk (assessment) plans and monitoring and evaluation structures. Little resistance can and/or is given to these stricter requirements as NGDOs fear that noncompliance will result in the loss of their funding as many others are eager to comply to these requirements in return for funding, and domestic funding sources are not considered a viable alternative. Since the requirements and conditions attached to funding have become more detailed over the past decade and the implementation processes and reporting requirements and guidelines imposed by these donors have also intensified.

“The rules are very strict. The rules are so difficult. And you have to work according to the rules. The donor has the money, so the donor determines when you get the money, how you do the work, the reports, and this brings a lot of pressure on you. And you have to work to be able to get their resources, to deliver, to impress the donor, so that the donor will continue to work with you” (Average NGDO; February 24, 2023)

Several NGDO practitioners have pointed out that these tightened rules and conditions attached to the funding directly impact the programs they provide:

“Yes, I would say not 100%, but in some way it has affected the effectiveness of the programs we run because access to funding is the foundation for any practice or project that you undertake, so in order to access that funding, which is highly competitive, you need to do what the donor requires, and what he requires may not be practically feasible at the community or grassroots level, so definitely it will affect the program” (Average NGDO; March 1, 2023).

The NGDOs that survive this increasingly competitive funding arena are those that know best how to navigate these contemporary relations with western donors. Interviewees outline that those are the NGDOs that have the (financial) capacity to invest significant amounts of time and money into grant proposal writing and are able to hire the best staff,

which are described as those with a high education and experience with international NGOs and/or proposal writing. A strong online presence as well as a connections and a strong informal network are further ingredients in the 'recipe for a successful contemporary NGDO'. NGDO practitioners report that therefore, skills and experience related to global north development practices currently trumps particular expertise and experience with local contexts, development praxis and knowledge systems. Funding must be prioritised over content as there is no content without funding.

Since 2010 the funding landscape in the Ghanaian aid sector has changed significantly. Where funding streams were previously spread over a wide array of big and small NGDOs, each having their own connection with development actors in the global north, the funding has increasingly concentrated around several larger organisations that have taken up a 'gatekeeping role' in the arena while smaller NGDOs have fallen further to the background. Forming strong competitors in this increasingly competitive funding arena, foreign funding has increasingly centred around these gatekeepers who then subgrant this to smaller NGDOs for the further implementation of programs. These gatekeepers have started to function as new intermediaries between Ghanaian NGDOs and international development actors. Their characteristics and role will be further elaborated on in section 5.3 One such 'gatekeeper', a large NGDO taking up the role between global north donors and smaller Ghanaian NGDOs, explains the shift in funding towards organisations such as theirs as follows:

"We try not to compete with organisations that we have been providing support for in the past, but then also position ourselves as the go-to NGO for funders who wanted to reach a bigger impact without having to deal with the issues of relating to CSOs on the ground on the one to one basis, and would rather prefer to channel funds through an entity such as ours" (Gatekeeper; March 15, 2023)

While many smaller NGDOs have not survived the increasingly competitive funding arena, the ones that have do still scour around in search of direct funding sources but find themselves increasingly dependent on the breadcrumbs that are passed down by gatekeepers. Examples of such Ghanaian gatekeepers are STAR Ghana Foundation, Action Aid, and various other large NGOs. Some Ghanaian counterparts of INGOs, such as Care International and Plan International may also function as gatekeepers as they, besides implementing their own projects, are increasingly applying for funding from bilateral and multilateral donors and sub-granting the obtained funding to smaller Ghanaian NGDOs.

These gatekeepers do not completely fit the definition of INGOs as they are not only building their own projects and programs but also engage significantly in the process of sub-granting. However, they also cannot be considered NGDOs as they often have one foot in the Ghanaian context and another in the western donor countries due to strong ties with foreign governments and bilateral partners. While the vast amounts of funding available in 2010 would often reach smaller NGOs working closely with local communities directly, practitioners describe that these gatekeepers have increasingly become intermediaries where great parts of the funds stick, resulting in even smaller amounts reaching the intended beneficiaries; as outlined by an expert:

“But usually what happens is that a bigger organisation becomes the lead and then collaborates with organisations at the sub national level and unfortunately transfers that same part dynamic to that local organisation. So the local organisation ends up doing all the work but doesn't get the resources that it's supposed to get because it just doesn't have the capacity to do that complex reporting, complex engagement, complex conversations” (Expert; March 13, 2023)

An executive director adds on to this as he outlines the changes for his organisation, a smaller NGDO:

“Yeah, basically once the grant is approved, those who are going to do the implementation, looking at the funding that comes to you, it may hopefully be 20 or 30%. A significant part of it will be retained by the lead organisation but they are not those who are on the ground going to bring about the change you know. The money must go to where the change needs to happen. Their structure of funding is so that the organisations that lead directly receive the funds and retain a significant part of the resources and then those that really bring about the change get a drop of the funding. It is a model that for me also has to change” (Small NGDO; March 17, 2023)

While the statistics and previous research may suggest that the WB reclassification has triggered financial independence among Ghanaian NGDOs, conversations with NGDO practitioners and experts have outlined that this is perhaps not the case. In fact, they outline that the reclassification has, instead of functioning as a jumping board to a sustainable future, made Ghanaian NGDOs even more dependent on global north development actors. Where in 2010, NGDOs would have access to large amounts of funding, and mainly direct partnerships, they now find themselves accountable to the stricter conditions as well as intensified implementation and monitoring and evaluation

processes. Additionally, gatekeepers have distinguished themselves on the Ghanaian development stage, increasingly functioning as intermediaries between these NGOs and global north development actors. So in answer to the first sub-question: Ghanaian development practitioners and experts report that, compared to 2010, Ghanaian NGOs have in fact become more dependent on global north development actors (as well as large Ghanaian gatekeepers!), which can be illustrated with the example of the gender equality agenda.

5.2 The gender equality agenda as an example

The gender equality agenda proves an interesting and counter intuitive case to illustrate how the shift in funding, resulting from the WB reclassification (and further encouraged by the government's Ghana Beyond Aid) has in fact further tilted the relational power dynamics in favour of global north development actors.

Within the context of this research, the gender equality agenda was observed in particular as this was described by the Government of Ghana as one of two non-basic needs on the Ghanaian development agenda. The four basic needs outlined by the Ghanaian government were: education, health, water & sanitation and agriculture, while climate change and the gender agenda were categorised as non-basic needs. As the gender agenda was not categorised as a basic need, I expected programs directed at gender equality to be the first to suffer from the withdrawal of foreign funds as they might be deemed less 'essential'.

However, conversations with development practitioners as well as development and/or gender experts told me otherwise. The gender equality agenda seems to have gotten only more prominence in the Ghanaian development sector.

"For the agenda programming, I think even at the UN level, the UN agencies, they prioritise gender. That is the gender and education. Funding in that area, even though it has changed, there's still a lot of the funding in the area of gender because there are still a lot of issues to be done, especially gender and education. So there's still a lot of money' (Average NGO; February 24, 2023).

Several experts report that the gender equality agenda gained more prominence after the UN Beijing Conference on Gender Equality 1995, after which the western agenda became increasingly focussed on gender issues. This in turn has trickled down into the Ghanaian development sector and until this day, programmes addressing gender inequality remain

to be the most heavily funded by the Ghanaian gatekeepers; As shown in figure 7, the funding allocation agenda of one of Ghana’s biggest gatekeepers, STAR Ghana Foundation offers an example.

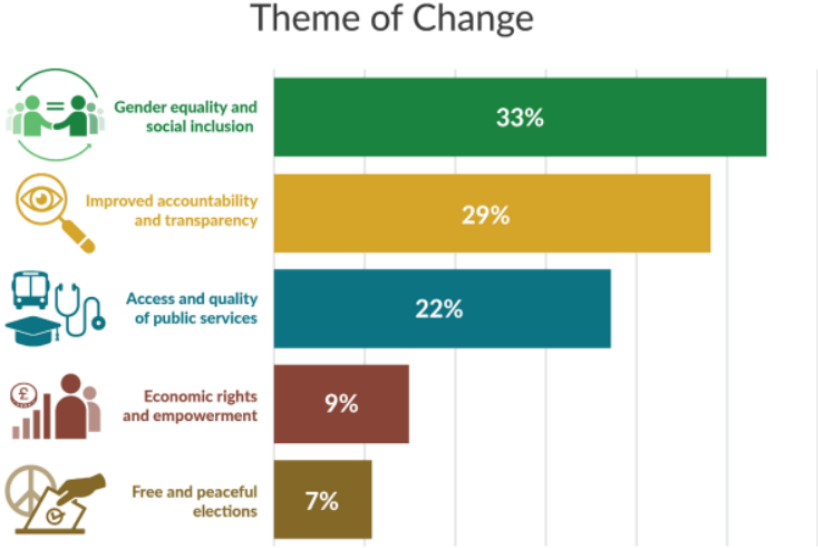


Figure 7: Themes of Changes from STAR Ghana foundation (STAR Ghana, 2023)

This is not to say that gender equality is irrelevant for the Ghanaian development agenda. Indeed, there is a lot of ground to gain, however, as has been pointed out by Charles van Dyck, a Ghanaian development expert as well as by Chanase (2021), Ghanaian NGOs are characterised by their lack of thematic focus, and adjusting to the availability of funding for particular thematic areas, disregarding their own prioritisations. A Ghanaian NGO network confirms this quick shift in focus:

“And then is the whole issue about the changing landscape of the donor community. Yeah, so today this will be and because you are dependent on them today, they will say that this is what they are pushing and if you need funds then you have to follow what they are pushing. If you want to maintain what you are doing then it means you don't have funds and you know now there is also none now” (NGDO network; March 10, 2023)

When taking a closer look at NGOs portraying themselves as organisations promoting gender equality (e.g. by studying the websites of these NGOs), often times its becomes clear that the core focus originally lied (and still does) on other thematic areas and developmental challenges such as health, education or agriculture (areas defined by the GoG as basic needs), yet through applying a gendered lense on such activities qualifying themselves for the funding that they need to carry out their own development agenda.

“I remember in some of the communities. We got in there and there were no women. The women were few. But by the condition of the funds, we are supposed to have women groups. So yes, the men were supposed to have been few, but the men were more in the community than women. But because of the funding we are seeking, we have to dance by the tune. Currently there is more funding targeting women” (Average NGDO; February 9, 2023)

Besides the continued, perhaps even increased, adoption of the global north development agenda, a second development that has been highlighted by development practitioners and experts is the change in type of interventions that are being implemented to address gender inequality (and other programs). Within the context of this research, all practitioners have outlined a shift from service delivery to advocacy programs. While the former provides communities with the services they need (e.g. a well, a school, a library, etc.), the latter focusses on empowering local communities to go to government and demand what they need. This too has been a funding-steered development, promoted by western donors. Practitioners and experts highlight that these global north development actors now expect the Ghanaian Government to be able to provide in the needs of its citizens (as the World Bank’s reclassification suggests):

“So the programmes started changing because some of the donors were indicating that now that Ghana is a lower middle income country, you have to change your focus to advocacy. Instead of giving the people their money, you have to empower them to be able to demand all the services from your government because your government is now a bit more rich than previously. So that was how it started changing, the programmes were changing from service delivery to a rights based approach to development” (Average NGDO; February 24, 2023)

It must be noted, however, that when asked about the effectiveness of this shift towards advocacy programs, mixed responses were given. In the short term, it means that some communities are not getting the interventions that are needed as the government will not or cannot provide in some demands that are made. Combined with the shift away from service delivery, this means that the development and growth of some communities has stagnated compared to 2010. However, several practitioners as well as some experts emphasise that in the long term, the change in type of interventions provided is bringing about attitudinal change among the Ghanaian public and empowering them to all on their own government and so increasing the pressure on the government to step up and

provide for the needs of its citizens. Keeping this long-term vision in mind, this change is seen as beneficial to the Ghanaian development agenda.

So when looking at the gender equality as a reflection of the changes in financial dependence between Ghanaian and global north development actors since 2010, we see that the development agenda is in the very least equally, and perhaps even more influenced by global north development actors. As gender remains to be a high priority in the global north, Ghanaian NGOs feel tempted to apply a gendered lens to their various activities in order to secure the funding needed for their survival in this increasingly competitive funding arena. Additionally, Ghanaian development practitioners emphasise that in 2010 there was funding available for implementing projects in exactly the way they aimed to do; however, now, when less funding is available, they feel more pressure to comply with stricter conditions attached to funding serving as prescriptions for how the project should be implemented. In the case of the gender equality agenda, this means a strong shift in the type of interventions implemented, focussing on advocacy programs rather than service delivery. While most practitioners and experts recognise that this shift may benefit the Ghanaian people in the long-term, in the short-term it feels to some as a though pace of growth and progress experienced around 2010, is stagnating today.

5.3 Changing power dynamics

As section 5.1 and 5.2 have outlined, looking at the changes in financial dependency of Ghanaian NGOs on global north development actors, we may conclude that contrary to what the statistics and Kumi's research may suggest, Ghanaian NGOs have in fact become more dependent on global north development actors for their survival. Building on this assumption, the second sub-question of this research questions how this has affected the relational power dynamics between the various actors on the Ghanaian development stage.

As discussed in section 2.4 of this thesis paper, the main actors on this stage are the following:

- Bilateral actors
- Multilateral agencies/actors
- International Non-Governmental Organisations/groups
- Recipient government
- (Recipient) Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations

This research has attempted to outline how the relationships (of power) between these various actors have changed since 2010 as a result of the country's reclassification and the subsequent efflux of foreign aid funds. When asked about how these actors related to each other in 2010, development practitioners and experts outline an aid context in which there was a lot of funding provided by bilateral, multilateral and INGO actors to recipient governments and Ghanaian NGDOs. Most NGDOs had direct partnerships with global north development actors. While global north project management frameworks were often attached to the funding as a means to accountability, the content and implementation strategies of NGDO programmes and projects usually did not have to be altered. Furthermore, little specific value was attached to relations with the Ghanaian government. Development practitioners outlined that they aimed to fill the gaps in services and needs in which the government did not/could not provide. Confirming Nyimah Bwole's (2013) description, they confirmed that the relationship between NGDOs and (local) governments were 'superficial and loaded with suspicious cordiality', collaborations largely tokenistic and the two may be described as 'friendly foes'.

Since 2010, however, these relationships have changed significantly. The World Bank's reclassification triggered an exit of many bilateral, multilateral and INGO actors from the Ghanaian aid sector, and a withdrawal of funds from many of those that stayed. The consequences of the WB reclassification have not only impacted power relations between global north development actors and Ghanaian NGDOs, but importantly, also domestic relations between those NGDOs themselves as well as their relation to the government.

From the interviews it has become clear that large Ghanaian NGDOs have come to take up the role of new intermediaries as foreign funding agencies saw them as the preferred partner. They often acquiring large sums of foreign aid funds and sub-granting these to smaller local NGDOs. In doing so, they now have a gatekeeping function as they receive the money (as well as the conditions and requirements attached to this funding) and then allocate it according to their own agenda. These may be Ghana-founded organisations such as STAR Ghana foundation, but also Ghanaian counterparts of INGOs have started to take on this role as some have moved far beyond the scope of implementing their own projects and programs and are increasingly engaging in processes of sub-granting. Therefore, this research paper proposes a distinction between Ghanaian-rooted NGDOs and the introduction of Gatekeepers as a type of NGO on their own, positioning themselves between INGOs and NGDOs, having one foot in each world. Consequently, smaller NGDOs now often find themselves with less direct links to global north

development actors, resulting in less funding trickling down to their organisations and often even more accountability measures attached to the funding that is received.

Another development that must be noted is that of consortium formation. As development practitioners have highlighted, acquiring funding, as well as the stricter implementation and monitoring and evaluation requirements attached, has made 'doing aid' in Ghana significantly more labour-intensive. Practitioners emphasise that many (smaller) NGOs don't have the means and resources to compete in this increasingly competitive funding arena. Therefore, since 2010, the Ghanaian aid sector is characterised by a growing amount of consortiums that are formed in which several NGOs combine their resources to apply for grants, and so standing a greater chance at survival in the arena. This is seen in two main forms mostly: either a collection of smaller NGOs applying as subgrantees of larger Ghanaian NGOs (the aforementioned gatekeepers) or applying for funding directly from a foreign donor (with potentially a gatekeeper involved in the consortium, taking the lead).

"The CSO space has grown to a state that consortiums or coalitions are now the way. Where you have the coming together of more NGOs, especially the local ones. Because the belief is that once you are coming together as a network, your voice is heard louder. This also helps in the southern leadership, as the biggest of the local one would be the lead of the team to serve as mentor, giving them grants and that will empower them. Like Action Aid, Star Ghana Foundation among others are playing that role. So that model really, beyond the fact that it strengthens Southern leadership, it provides opportunity to smaller NGOs to grow because they get to pick funds from local organisations that have the opportunity to maintain them to strengthen their systems" (Average NGO; March 24, 2023).

Besides changes in relations between Ghanaian NGOs and global north development actors as well as between NGOs domestically among themselves, the relations between the Ghanaian government and NGOs have also changed. As mentioned before, the Ghanaian government strived for its reclassification since 1995 and welcomed it, even prided itself on its achievement, despite the fact that it came about in 2010, a decade earlier than planned.

In line with these developments, the government published a new vision in 2019: "Ghana Beyond Aid", in which the government outlined its goal of becoming independent of aid. Presented closely prior to the new elections, the government wanted

to present a vision of independence for Ghana to strive towards. While it was meant as a statement of intent, through lack of concrete pathways to reach GhBA as well as lack of proper communication about how to interpret this charter, many global north development actors interpreted the vision as a governmental statement signalling that Ghana was ready to be independent of foreign aid. Practitioners and experts interviewed feel that the Ghana Beyond Aid-Vision and how it was presented, has triggered an even further withdrawal of foreign donor funds.

“Almost everything has been capped ever since the President declared that (GhBA). It appears that we are no longer getting aid anywhere apart from going for loans from the IMF. And so it has finally led to the country being heavily indebted plus plus. Yeah, I think that our donors did not understand the president’s motivation and context of saying that he wants Ghana beyond aid. It is not that we are already in Ghana beyond aid. Unfortunately, since that thing was declared, all our donors went back to bed and said: ‘Ohh, Ghana is beyond aid’. And that is where it has led us to where we are now. Yeah, that’s the unfortunate thing. The principle behind it was a good one, but the perceptual reaction of the West towards it has been a bad one and it has led us to a very bad situation as we speak now” (Small NGDO; March 21, 2023).

In short, while NGDOs were already struggling with diminishing funds due to the country’s reclassification, many feel that the government, in name of an election campaign, has worsened the situation rather than aided its own development sector. Through its response, foreign funding seems to have withdrawn further, leading ultimately to the request of new IMF loans in 2022. Practitioners and experts interviewed feel that through these new loans, the influence of the west and their agenda on the country’s development has once again increased. While being supportive of Ghana Beyond Aid as a concept and future need, it is currently perceived as a hollow shell of promises on which the government does not and cannot deliver.

“Because yes, we are saying this (GhBA), but on the contrary, we are doing the opposite and of course a clear example as to what I am saying is that once we take these IMF loans, they will tell us how to spend that money and tell us what to do as a country. And so government will be holding the steer, but IMF will direct them in terms of which direction we should go as an economy. And of course then your government mantra will not work in this case because you are being controlled and this is how we are moving back again to

colonisation of aid. Like I said, because it means that you get to be dictated in terms of what you should do and what you should not do” (Average NGDO; March 24, 2023).

Considering the above, indeed we must conclude that power relations between development actors on the Ghanaian aid stage have changed significantly since 2010. NGDO practitioners outline to have felt more autonomy and agency over their own work a decade ago and described a ‘live-and-let-live’-relationship with their own government. Contrastingly, they emphasise to now feel more pressure to silence their voices and comply to the conditions set by global north development actors, or gatekeepers for that matter, in order to secure finances for their survival. Interviewees expressed little trust in the Ghanaian government coming to their aid as they highlight how the government, regardless of its ambitious intentions, has in fact worsened the situation of many NGDOs.

5.4 A Ghanaian interpretation

While the past three sections clearly demonstrated the impact and consequences of the financial (in)dependence, the question yet unresolved is how these dynamics are interpreted in light with the broader topic of this thesis, the need for a decoloniality of aid. How to practitioners interpret and perceive these changes? This final section addresses the third sub-question posed in this research, highlighting the value that is attached to these changes by Ghanaian development practitioners and experts themselves, in an attempt to heed Khan’s (2021) call to spotlight and centre global south perspectives rather than my own interpretation as a white, 25-year-old, Dutch woman studying International Development Studies in the global north.

Within the context of this research, most development practitioners of small and average-sized NGDOs talked about situations of struggle, challenge and hardship and highlight that Ghana’s development status, while being reclassified as a LMIC rather than a LIC, has, in fact, worsened. They emphasise that in order to continue their overall operations, they have to allocate significantly more resources and time to acquire funding, often adjusting the content of their programs to have a shot at obtaining it. The increased pressure on their survival that they report to experience is described as a negative development.

Experts and NGDO networks, however, perhaps able to provide a bit more of a helicopter view, attach slightly different values to these developments. Highlighting how the reclassification has pushed forward discussions on resilience and sustainability, several experts acknowledge the financial struggles that NGDOs are currently in but also emphasise the need for these conversations that were difficult to have when the funding

flowed freely. The reclassification has indeed led to the termination of many NGOs, and perhaps led to further colonising power dynamics, but in its trail, it has pulled Ghanaian NGOs together as they are starting to form consortiums, collaborate more and increasingly focus on aligning their development agendas, though be it for the sake of acquiring funding. Experts and NGO networks emphasise that, while NGOs may experience this as a struggle and a negative development, in the long term it may strengthen the Ghanaian aid sector as it may now focus more on long-term sustainable programs rather than dispersed short-term projects.

Additionally, they highlight the so-called gatekeeping NGOs, though indeed having a negative impact on the funding that actually reaches local communities in the short term, may prove to be the perfect brokers for pushing forward the agenda of decoloniality of aid in Ghana.

STAR Ghana Foundation in particular, for example, outlines its shift internally from being Western-steered to recently having been turned into a foundation (in 2018) aiming to prioritise the strengthening of the local aid sector and leading the conversation about the decolonisation of aid. Over the past months, STAR Ghana Foundation has been working on developing new frameworks and ways of doing aid, focussing on those small NGOs that do not have the resources and/or know-how to compete in the funding arena but are doing impactful work. Under the umbrella of a capacity building program, these small NGOs can apply for funding through an audio/video grant application, using local dialects rather than English if that is preferred. With the help of STAR Ghana employees, they are taken by the hand to develop a proposal after which funding is granted. This way of working is then also further drawn into the implementation process, e.g. through verbal/visual monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Through this program, these smaller NGOs are supported through a process of four years into strong, independent NGOs that can either compete in the funding arena or may find alternative resource mobilisation strategies locally. By strengthening these organisations, gatekeepers, such as STAR Ghana Foundation, hope that ultimately these NGOs may contribute to the growing voice of the global south humanitarian sector pushing forward the agenda of decoloniality of aid in Ghana, and become part of a mindset shift within the sector.

At the same time, finding themselves at the centre of the debate about decoloniality of aid, these gatekeepers also take up a mediating role towards western actors and donors. As they have significantly grown over the past decade, they now feel that they have the

capacity, power and responsibility to be the leaders in this conversation. While acknowledging that this movement was imported from the west, they believe that it is up to them to spread it further, also towards partners that have not yet woken up to the agenda of decoloniality of aid.

“One of the key things is that we realised that the whole concept of shifting the power is not only from us to our partners, but then also between us and our donors. And so we are now at a point where we are filtering all our grants through the Shifting the Power lens, even for those that are not part of the conversation. So we are starting the conversation with them... And one of the key things for us is to document this journey because we realise a new approach, a new way of working, is very important for us to document for learning purposes in the space” (Gatekeeper; March 15, 2023).

Therefore, while the immediate impact of the dwindling funding as a result of the World Bank’s reclassification may point to power dynamics being skewed further in favour of global north donors (and gatekeepers), the centralisation of finances and power around these gatekeepers may have opened a door for the decoloniality of aid agenda in the Ghanaian aid sector and may ultimately function as a catalyser of the movement. These gatekeepers, keen on winning back the trust of the Ghanaian public and with a strong enough voice towards western donors, may so perhaps turn out to be the ideal brokers in pushing forward the agenda on decoloniality of aid.

One expert emphasises that while the contemporary decoloniality of aid agenda is pushed forward by global north development actors, it is also starting to root itself slowly in the (West-)African aid sector, carried forward in the Shift the Power movement. Gaining prominence after the World Humanitarian Summit in Johannesburg in 2016, the movement finds its roots in the contemporary localisation agenda, focussing on prioritising locally-led development agenda’s rather than western-steered programs.

“In essence, shift the power is about co creation, ownership, participation, and empowerment of local communities. It is about communities taking the lead in setting the agenda of their own development. It is also about restoring the balance, relinquishing, and reverting power to communities” (Chanase, 2021).

Shift The Power embodies the felt desire and need for a Ghanaian-steered development agenda, however, several experts and NGDO networks note that among Ghanaian NGDOs there is still very little awareness of these skewed power dynamics in the first place. They

argue that these organisations remain too focussed on their own survival to find themselves concerned with the decoloniality of aid debate, however relevant and necessary this debate may be.

“But what is happening is that with the decolonization debate, I don't really feel that a lot of organisations have woken up to the whole idea, especially those at the grassroots level, those at the peripheries, those of ground community based organisations, are still not in the conversation. The conversation has largely been driven by organised national organisations that have a strong relationship with the intermediaries in the global north... the NGOs are always agonising instead of organising. So here is a clear opportunity for local organisations to rethink how they source money, funding, support and how they go about their development, but instead they are seeing it as a hindrance. So the consciousness again is not there. We are still yoked so much to that old age dependency syndrome that is ingrained in local organisations” (Expert; March 15, 2023).

Thus, while Ghana's largest gatekeepers desire to be leaders in the Shift the Power movement, and may prove to be the perfect broker between both worlds, the fragility of their position becomes painfully clear when we see that this movement too is largely dependent on foreign donor funds coming from the global north (and their accompanied agenda). So, when addressing the third sub-question posed in this research, development practitioners largely emphasise that they are experiencing increased pressures and more limited agency and autonomy over their work compared to 2010, combined with an increasing distrust against their government to support and carry them. Experts and NGDO networks highlight that the WB classification, and the resulting changes in the funding landscape, has triggered a, perhaps needed, disruption of the Ghanaian aid sector to finally proactively consider its pathways to a sustainable future. While they argue that this may positively impact the way of 'doing aid' in Ghana in the long run, strengthen the voices that survive and catalyse the movement surrounding decoloniality of aid, in the short term they outline that the changes in funding have pushed most NGDOs so far into a state of survival that very few manage to even consider the movement at all, let alone engage with it.

6. Discussion & Conclusions

While chapter 5 has outlined how the results of this research address each of the sub-questions posed in this research paper, the following chapter further discusses how these contribute to answering the larger research question presented:

To what extent has Ghana's reclassification to a middle-income country contributed to the decoloniality of aid among Ghanaian Non-Governmental Domestic Organisations (NGDOs)?

Ultimately this chapter discusses how the Ghanaian case study contributes to the expectation that financial independence of global south development actors from those in the global north can be considered a catalyser for the implementation of the decoloniality of aid agenda in the global south.

The movement surrounding decoloniality of aid, while originating from the global south, has found significant traction in the global north international development field over the recent years (Mawdsley, 2012). However, it has found limited uptake by global south development actors. Decolonial theorists argue that relations of financial dependence of global south development actors on those in the global north uphold a certain hesitance to engage in the debate on decoloniality of aid, as they remain dependent of global north funds for their operations. Therefore, several decolonial theorists have argued that financial dependence of these global south development actors may prove to be a catalysing function in allowing these actors to engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda (Mawdsley, 2012; Hickel, 2017; Amanor, 2009 & Rapley, 2017; Moyo, 2009).

Within the context of this research, the Ghanaian aid sector has been observed as a case study as its funding landscape has changed significantly over the last decade. Long strived for by the Ghanaian government, and pushed forward by multilateral development actors in the global north, obtaining the status of a lower middle-income country was considered to be the far goal on the horizon. Due to a rebasing exercise by the World Bank, however, Ghana obtained its desired status a decade earlier than planned triggering a significant efflux of foreign aid funds from the country. This posed the estimated 6500 NGDOs for an immediate funding challenge (Chanase, 2021) and, arguably for the first time, confronted these NGDOs to think about securing sustainable pathways into the future as highlighted by an expert in this research (March 13, 2023).

Through qualitative interviews with Ghanaian development practitioners and experts, this research has shown that, while the World Bank statistics and Kumi's (2017) work may suggest a trend towards financial independence, these alternative resource mobilisation strategies have proven to be little fruitful. Thirteen years after Ghana's reclassification, development practitioners report to still be largely dependent on foreign donor funds. However, as a result of the WB reclassification (combined with the governmental GhBA vision released in 2019), the amount of funds entering the country has halved. This has significantly affected the power dynamics between the various actors on the Ghanaian development stage, impacting relations between Ghanaian NGOs and global north development actors as well as between NGOs among themselves domestically.

Practitioners, experts and NGO networks describe an increasingly competitive funding arena in which a growing amount of NGOs compete for a shrinking amount of funding. Consequently, Ghanaian NGOs find themselves navigating through multiple-round grant application processes, altering their intervention models (increasingly focussed on advocacy programs) and submitting themselves to the scrutiny of more labour-intense monitoring and evaluation frameworks imposed by global north development actors (and gatekeepers). While most Ghanaian development practitioners experience these changes as negative developments, experts and NGO networks highlight that the triggered discussions about sustainability as well as the growing voices of gatekeepers may catalyse the decoloniality of aid agenda in the long term. In the short term, however, they report that in today's Ghanaian development context, most NGOs have been pushed into a survival mode as a result of the financial dependence imposed through the WB reclassification, rather than being able to more actively engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda.

To consider the main research question of in how far the decoloniality of aid in Ghana is indeed occurred due to the shifts in the funding landscape, I return to the four core themes in the decoloniality agenda:

- Power and representation
- Knowledge production and epistemic justice
- Ownership and localisation
- Reimagining development paradigms

Addressing the first key theme, that of power and representation, Mignolo & Walsch (2018), Quijano (2000) and Escobar (1995) present inclusive partnerships focussed on balanced and equal decision-making processes as an essential stepping stone in moving towards decoloniality of aid. This requires the disempowerment of (financial) relations of dependency. Ghana's case study, however, has shown that such inclusive, balanced and equal relationships between global north and global south development actors cannot be ensured only through the withdrawal of foreign aid funds. As the case study has illustrated, the absence of viable alternative resource channels may in fact make global south development actors even more dependent. As more and more global north donors decide to withdraw, the supply-and-demand scale then further tips over, allowing the small number that supplies funding to create very labour-intensive, detailed, niche projects, as they are able to select from a sea of demanding applicants. In Ghana's case, the suggested financial dependence has in fact, through lack of viable alternatives, tipped the power balance even further in favour of global north development actors. Combined with the fact that the government has resorted to new IMF loans we find a country, and development sector that is subjected to more colonising dynamics, rather than decolonising ones. Reflecting these results against the work of Gronopo (2012) on internal colonialism, it can be argued that with the rise of gatekeepers, a domestic system of skewed power dynamics has developed, perpetuating these colonial power dynamics. While indeed they aim to push forward the agenda for decoloniality of aid, for example through developing local project management frameworks and prioritising local knowledge systems, their very presence reinforces the very dynamics the decoloniality of aid agenda aims to disempower.

Analysing the second key theme of the decoloniality of aid agenda, may however, present a more nuanced view. Mignolo (2011), Smith (1999) and Santos (2014) emphasise the need for prioritisation of knowledge systems and epistemologies emerging from the global south. In Ghana's case study, we see how the increased pressure on its aid sector has pulled NGOs to work together to create stronger voices (to obtain funding). This has resulted in increased sharing of know-how and resources, facilitating the strengthening of these global south knowledge systems. Similarly, as funding has centred around gatekeepers, these have become large and powerful enough to start developing context-sensitive aid models and present them to their global north donors as alternatives to the project management models often imposed from above. In the context of this research, STAR Ghana Foundation is presented as a clear example of this development. The

strength, however, remains in numbers and consortiums, as smaller/individual NGOs report to feel more hesitant in presenting alternative knowledges to their donors in fear of losing their funding.

Considering the last two themes pushed forward by the decoloniality of aid agenda, the Ghanaian case study does show a development towards the reimagining of development paradigms away from economic growth. As argued for by Escobar (1995), Esteva & Prakash (1998) and Sen (1999), development interventions are, through advocacy programs, increasingly focussed on empowering local communities to go to government with their demands rather than depend on service delivery provided by international development actor. While this is experienced as a positive development by Ghanaian development practitioners, experts and NGO networks, the extent to which this is done through localisation and encouragement of ownership over development interventions remain debatable. While advocacy programs in themselves are indeed focussed on promoting ownership of local development agendas, their very introduction into the Ghanaian aid sector was largely funding-steered. As global north development actors determined, based on the World Bank's reclassification, that the Ghanaian government should be ready to take on more responsibility for its own development, a shift towards advocacy programs was set into motion. The fact that the Ghanaian government has not been able to do so and is now requesting further aid from the IMF, combined with the absence of viable resource alternatives, leaves Ghanaian NGOs little autonomy and agency in determining their own development agenda. As (co-)funding is nowadays mostly made available for advocacy programs and gendered programs, NGOs have little choice but to part with their service delivery operations in order to ensure their survival. Therefore, while advocacy programs are aimed at promoting ownership and localisation, the absence of any alternative choices except for comply with this global north development agenda actually leaves Ghanaian NGOs with a sense of diminished agency in comparison to 2010.

When the Ghanaian case study is compared and contrasted against the decoloniality of aid agenda, it seems that several of its themes may have found shallow roots in the Ghanaian aid sector. However, these developments seem to be a result of chance by circumstance rather than that they can be allocated to the supposed financial dependence of Ghanaian NGOs resulting from the WB reclassification. Addressing the main research question of this thesis paper will lead us to conclude that rather than facilitating decolonising processes in the Ghanaian aid sector, the suggested financial

independence triggered by the World Bank's reclassification has in fact facilitated these colonising dynamics rather than disempowered them, internationally and domestically. More than a decade after this reclassification, Ghanaian NGOs in fact find themselves more financially dependent on global north development actors and experience more pressure to comply with their presented agenda. While this increased pressure may indeed have strengthened several gatekeepers and NGO consortia to rise up and engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda, the remaining NGOs, by far the largest group, find themselves pushed into a survival mode and further than ever away from feeling enabled to actively engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda.

Taking a step back, it is worthwhile to consider what this means for the contemporary way of doing aid and to what extent the decoloniality of aid agenda has any chance of rooting in the global south in a 'classified' aid system. While the World Bank's reclassification, and response of international development actors to it, suggests that Ghana can be considered developed enough to expect its government as well as the Ghanaian public to step up and carry its development sector (financially), it should be questioned whether this is a realistic expectation. The same Bretton Wood institutions that have called for roll-back of the state for decades as a condition attached to the Official Development Aid provided through SAPs, are now expecting, and perhaps even demanding, that these same governments now step in, strong and able to take ownership over their own development agenda now that these Bretton Wood standards consider them 'more developed'. As a result, the NGO sector flourished in the vacuum left by the hollowing out of the state, taking on a (debatable disproportionate) responsibility in providing the Ghanaian public with its basic and non-basic needs. As the Ghanaian case study has shown, however, this aid sector is only as strong as its ability to tap into foreign aid funds, which in turn, again is dependent on the categorisation and classifications of these very same Bretton Woods Institutions. Therefore, the progress of development tends to become a vicious cycle in which these institutions determine when a country can be 'upgraded' in its development status, triggering large international development actors to start withdrawing from the country and allocate their funds elsewhere. The result of this is that countries that are largely reliant on these funds, as a consequence of a roll-back of the state demanded through SAPs (!), have trouble mobilising domestic resources and their development processes stagnate (perhaps until they fall back into the lower-income country categorisation again and the funding floodgates reopen).

Critically reflecting on this, we are presented with a system that is focussed more on feeding the sense of 'white saviourism' among global north development actors, rather than providing classifications that may systematically assist countries in the global south to become independent of aid. Currently the World Bank classification system seems to function rather as a justification mechanism for these development actors in the global north to make sudden entrances and exits to feed the perpetual image of always helping those 'most in need', allocating their funds to the poorest countries, rather than offering global south development actors' pathways towards systematic, sustainable progress and development.

Therefore, while development actors and academics in the global north present financial independence as the key in allowing and encouraging global south development actors to engage with the decoloniality of aid agenda, this thesis has presented a more complicated reality. This research has demonstrated how when financial independence is aimed for through (simple) withdrawal of global north development actors and their funding alone, NGOs may ultimately find themselves even more dependent and subjected to more unbalanced power dynamics if there are no pathways to unlocking viable alternative resource mobilisation strategies that are effective. This research outlines that in a world where allocation of aid funds is dependent on Bretton Wood classifications, such as that of the World Bank, focussing on GDP, there may be little fertile soil for the decoloniality of aid agenda to root. This case study illustrated how when a country desires and manages to lift itself into a new categorisation, funds needed for further development (which cannot easily be substituted by hollowed out governments) withdraw so significantly that it plateaus and has to struggle to not fall back into its original categorisation. Therefore, while Ghana seemed to provide a fertile basis for the rooting of the decoloniality of aid agenda, the financial independence triggered by the WB reclassification has not proven to be a catalyser for it to germinate. Debatably it has perhaps even quenched the desire of local practitioners to raise their voices, prioritise their perspectives and actively engage with this debate. This is not to say that financial independence in itself may not be a catalyser for the decoloniality of aid movement; but in a world where a country's readiness for this independence relies mostly on classification systems, such as that of the World Bank, there may not be much of a future for decoloniality of aid.

7. References

All-African People's Revolutionary Party. (2023, January 4). *Nkrumah on neo-colonialism: An "interview"*. Retrieved from <https://aaprp-intl.org/nkrumah-on-neo-colonialism-an-interview/>

Amanor, K. (2008). *Land and sustainable development in Africa*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

Barnett, M. & Finnemore, M. (2004). *Rules for the world: International organizations in global politics*. Cornell University Press.

Barnett, M & Weiss, T. (2011). *Humanitarianism contested: Where angels fear to tread*. Milton Park, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Baum, B. (2015). Decolonising critical theory. *Constellations*, 22, 420-434.

Bawole, J. (2013). *Local government and NGO relations in Ghana: The paradox rhetoric and the isomorphic forces* [PhD dissertation thesis]. Retrieved from <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/local-government-and-ngo-relations-in-ghana-the-paradoxes-rhetori>

Bhamra, G. (2014). *Connected sociologies*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Britannica. (2022). *Ghana – History*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ghana>

Cardoso, F. H. (1969). *Dependency and development in Latin America*. University of California Press.

Carothers, T. & Gramont, D. (2013). *Development aid confronts politics*. Washington D.C., United States: Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace.

Chanase, G. (2021). Shift the power – Ghanaian NGOs at the crossroads of relinquishing power to local communities. *WACSeries*, 7(9), 1-9.

Chirot, D. & Hall, T. (1982). World-System Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8, 81-106.

Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion*. Oxford University Press.

Cornwall, A. (2007). Buzzwords and fuzzwords: Deconstructing development discourse. *Development in Practice*, 17(4-5), 471-484.

Cull, I., Hancock, R., McKeown, S., Pidgeon, M. & Vedan, A. (2018). *Pulling together: A guide for indigenisation of post-secondary studies*. Victoria BC, United States: BCcampus.

Cross, M. (2013). Rethinking epistemic communities twenty years on. *Review of International Studies*, 39(1), 137-160.

Devarajan, S. (2013). Africa's statistical tragedy. *The Review of Income and Wealth*, 59(S1), S9-S15.

Dos Santos, T. (1970). The structure of dependence. *The American Economic Review*, 60(2), 231-236.

Dreher, A., Fuchs, A., Parks, B. C., Strange, A. M., & Tierney, M. J. (2021). Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a new global development finance dataset. *American Economic Journal*, 13(2), 135-174.

Easterly, W. (2001). *The elusive quest for growth: Economists' adventures and misadventures in the tropics*. MIT Press.

Easterly, W. (2006). *The white man's burden: Why the west's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good*. New York, United States of America: Penguin Books.

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press.

Esteve, G. & Prakash, M. (1998). *Grassroots postmodernism: Remaking the soil of cultures*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

Esteve, G. & Escobar, A. (2017). Post-development @ 25: On being 'stuck' and moving forward, sideways, backward and otherwise. *Third World Quarterly*, 38, 2559-2560.

Fisher, J. (2015). The local turn: An introductory essay reconsidering the global. In Kaldor, M (Ed.), *Global civil society 2012: Ten years of critical reflection*, (p. 1-26). London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gary, I. (1996). Confrontation, co-operation or co-optation: NGOs and the Ghanaian state during structural adjustment. *Review of African Political Economy*, 23(68), 149-168.

Government of Ghana. (1995). *Ghana – Vision 2020* [Presidential Report].

Government of Ghana. (2019). *Ghana beyond aid charter and strategy document* [charter report]. Retrieved from http://osm.gov.gh/assets/downloads/ghana_beyond_aid_charter.pdf

Groglopo, A. (2013). Dependency theories and internal colonialism. The politics of epistemology and theoretical resistance. In Danell, R., Larsson, A., and Wisselgren, P. (Eds.), *Social Science in Context: Historical, Sociological and Global Perspectives*, (p. 205-219). Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press.

Herbst, J. (1993). *The politics of reform in Ghana, 1982-1991*. University of California Press.

Hickel, J. (2017). *The divide: A brief guide to global inequality and its solutions*. London, United Kingdom: Windmill Books.

Hodkinson, P. & Hodkinson, H. (2001). *The strengths and limitations of case study research* [Paper presented to the Learning and Skills Development Agency of the University of Leeds]. Retrieved from

[https://www.academia.edu/31677978/The Strengths and Limitations of Case Study Research](https://www.academia.edu/31677978/The_Strengths_and_Limitations_of_Case_Study_Research)

Hundle, A. (2019). Decolonizing diversity: The transnational politics of minority racial difference. *Public Culture*, 31(2), 289-322.

International Federation Red Cross. (n.d.). *Fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent*. Retrieved from <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/who-we-are/fundamental-principles/>

James, N. & Busher, H. (2016). *Online interviewing*. Cambridge University Press.

Jerven, M. & Duncan, M. (2012). Revising GDP estimates in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from Ghana. *The African Statistical Journal*, 15, 15-24.

Kay, C. (2011). *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Khan, T. (2021, January 15). *Decolonisation is a comfortable buzzword for the aid sector* [Opinion piece]. Retrieved from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/decolonisation-comfortable-buzzword-aid-sector/>

Kivits, J. (2005). Online interviewing and the research relationship. In Hine, E. (Ed.), *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*, (p. 35-50). Oxford, United Kingdom: Berg.

Kothari, U. (2019). *A radical history of development studies: Individuals, institutions and ideologies*. Claremont, South Africa: Zed Books.

Kumi, E. (2017). *Domestic resource mobilisation strategies of National Non-Governmental Development Organisations in Ghana* [Working Paper]. University of Bath.

LaVerle Bennette, B. (1994). *Ghana: A country study*. Washington D.C., United States: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Lewis, D. (2001). *The management of Non-Governmental Organisations: An introduction*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 240-270.

Mawdsley, E. (2012). *From recipients to donors: Emerging powers and the changing development landscape*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

McLaughing, J. & Owusu-Ansah, D. (1995). *Ghana: A country study*. Washington D.C., United States: Library of Congress.

Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of western modernity: Global futures and decolonial options*. Duke University Press.

Mignolo, W. (2013). On pluriversality and decolonial interculturalities. *Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 2(3), 88-104.

Mignolo, W. & Walsh, C. (2018). *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Duke University Press.

Mohanty, C. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press.

Moss, T. & Majerowicz, S. (2012). *No longer poor: Ghana's new income status and implications of graduation from IPA* [Working paper]. Retrieved from <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/no-longer-poor-ghana%E2%80%99s-new-income-status-and-implications-graduation-ida-working-paper>

Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*. New York, United States of America: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Nsouli, S. (1989). Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Finance & Development*, 30-33.

Nye, J. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Hachette, United Kingdom: Public Affairs.

Nyigmah Bawole, J. (2013). *Local government and NGO relations in Ghana: The paradox rhetoric and the isomorphic forces* [PhD dissertation thesis]. Retrieved from <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/local-government-and-ngo-relations-in-ghana-the-paradoxes-rhetori>

Opoku-Mensah, P., Lewis, D. & Tvedt, T. (2007). *Reconceptualising NGOs and their roles in development: NGOs, civil society and the international aid system*. Aalborg University Press.

Orgad, S. (2005) From online to offline and back: Moving from online to offline relationships with research participants. In Hine, E. (Ed.), *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*, (p. 51-66). Oxford, United Kingdom: Berg.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023a). *Methodological note on tracking development co-operation through international institution in DAC statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/tracking-flows-through-international-institutions.htm>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023b). *Frequently asked questions: Official Development Assistance (ODA)*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/faq.htm>

Peace Direct. (2021). *Time to decolonise aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation* [Report]. Retrieved from [PD-Decolonising-Aid Second-Edition.pdf \(peacedirect.org\)](https://www.peacedirect.org/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Second-Edition.pdf)

Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 533-580.

- Rapley, J. (2017). *Twilight of the money gods: Economics as a religion and how it all went wrong*. New York, United States of America: Simon & Schuster.
- Riddell, J. (1992). Things fall apart again: Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa. *The Journal of Modern Africa Studies*, 30(1), 53-68.
- Sachs, J. (2015). *The Age of Sustainable Development*. Columbia University Press.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Boulder, Colombia: Paradigm Publishers.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, T. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.
- Solow, R. (1956). A Contribution to the theory of economic growth. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 70(1), 65-94.
- STAR Ghana Foundation. (2023). *Our work*. Retrieved from <https://www.star-ghana.org/our-work>
- Statista. (2022). *Volume of crude oil produced in Ghana from 2009 to 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1231738/volume-of-crude-oil-production-in-ghana/>
- Tuck, E. & Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-40.
- United Nations Development Program. (2016). *Human development for everyone: Human development report*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-everyone>
- Wallerstein, I. (1979). *The capitalist world economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- World Bank. (1989). *Ghana: Second phase of the structural adjustment programme*. Retrieved from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/674111468032704873/pdf/multi0page.pdf>
- World Bank. (2022). *Data for Ghana, lower middle income*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=GH-XN>
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE

Appendices

Appendix A: Description of interviewees

No.	Interviewee	Position	Organisation	Description of organisation (quoted information below has been retrieved from the organisations' website)
1	Abdul Kasiru Shani	Head of programmes, policy & campaigns	Songtaba <i>(average)</i>	Songtaba is a Ghanaian NDGO with 13 members of staff providing gender equality programs in northern Ghana. It is dedicated to the mission of: “working with gender minded human rights organisations and individuals to advocate for gender inequality”.
2	Naana Abena Afadi	Program/Enterprise manager	Days for Girls <i>(average)</i>	Days for Girls is a Ghanaian NDGO dedicated to advocacy for menstrual equality throughout Africa, operating through entire Ghana.
3	Moses Dramani Luri	CEO/Board secretary	SILDEP <i>(small)</i>	SILDEP has a team of 6 core staff and focusses on “rural development through literacy and skills development with the focus on poverty mitigation”, in particular focussing on women and children.
4	Anthony Sugury Abako	Research and program quality coordinator	Norsaac <i>(gatekeeper)</i>	Norsaac consists of a team of 30 staff and is dedicated to “work with networks of women, youth, children, excluded

				groups, and like-minded organisations to strengthen their agency to claim and exercise their rights”.
5	Lois Aduamoah-Addo	Programme coordinator	WILDAF <i>(NGDO network)</i>	WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa) “is a Pan Africa Women’s Rights network which aims to promote and reinforce strategies that link law and development in order to increase women’s participation and influence at the local, national and international levels”.
6	Joan Vivian Koomson	Grants and resource mobilisation manager	STAR Ghana Foundation <i>(gatekeeper)</i>	STAR Ghana Foundation “is a national centre for active citizenship and philanthropy. The Foundation works towards the development of a vibrant, well-informed and assertive civil society able to contribute to transformational national development and inclusive access to high quality, accountable public services for all Ghanaian citizens”. It has supported over 232 organisations within Ghana.
7	Abass Hamza	Executive director	HACEP <i>(average)</i>	HACEP Ghana strives “to promote girls’ voice, choice, and agency, and to eliminate the disparity between the reality of girls’ lives in marginalized communities and the resources available to them.” This is done through a wide array of activities ranging from child marriage programs to HIV-campaigns.

8	Patricia Blankson Akakpo	Program manager	NETRIGHT <i>(NGDO network)</i>	“The Network for Women’s Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) is a network of civil society organisations and individuals who have a clear interest in working together to bring a gender perspective into national processes and advocate for policy change to strengthen women’s human rights.”
9	Raphael Ali Yenbapono	Program manager	TUWODEP <i>(small)</i>	TUWODEP aims to “to empower women especially the vulnerable so that they will be able to increase their economic fortunes, demand both their civic and human rights in society.” This is done by focussing on income security, health, micro-credit facility, advocacy and education.
10	Alberta Kwofie	Executive director	Genda in focus <i>(small)</i>	Genda in Focus “works towards gender equality in the Western region of Ghana by focusing on the areas of health, education, and governance. GIF carries out radio and community advocacy with parents and community members on issues such as the importance of schooling for teenage mothers, comprehensive SRHR education, and the prevention of unintended pregnancies.”
11	Mohammed Basit Jibreel	Head of programmes	Urbanet <i>(average)</i>	“URBANET is a social impact organization committed to the principles of social justice and human rights especially of the poor and the vulnerable segments of the society in Northern Ghana.” Various programs specifically target women such as sustainable entrepreneurship trainings, among other

				programs focussing on micro-credit programmes, agricultural projects and youth leadership programs for example.
12	Laud Kwaku Akuffo	Chief Executive Officer	TANF <i>(small)</i>	“The Anidaso Nsae Foundation (TANF) is an NGO based in Accra, Ghana, dedicated to the fight against poverty.” This is mainly done through providing educational services, of which a significant part focusses on girls in particular.
13	David Bagonluri Paapa	Executive director	Women Integrated <i>(average)</i>	“WIDO has been working by implementing various activities in the areas of livelihood, human rights and good governance through promotion of gender equality, education, food security, health and sanitation so as to empower and ensure the security of the livelihood of most vulnerable of the society.” Their work focusses on the upper west region of Ghana.
14	Marlene Keller	Programmes manager	AFAWI <i>(average)</i>	With a team of 5 staff members, “Alliance for African Women Initiative (AFAWI) is a grassroots Ghanaian organization, striving to narrow gender gaps and create opportunity and prosperity to empower women and children in Ghana”. This is done by focussing on livelihood projects, education, and health activities.
15	Gervin Chanase	Expert interview		After obtaining a bachelor degree in Development & Governance and a master degree in International/Global Studies, Gervin Chanase has worked for the Ghanaian NGO

				SEND followed by several years at the West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI). In his work he has focussed on the Shift the Power movement calling for decolonisation of aid in the Ghanaian aid sector.
16	Charles van Dyck	Expert interview		<p>“Charles is a social justice activist and thought leader with expertise in strengthening civil society resilience, sustainability, and leadership. Charles serves as a member of the Knowledge Network of the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and is also a Founding Member of the International Consortium on Closing Civic Space (iCon), an initiative of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He currently serves as a member of the Governing Board of Africans Rising, a Pan-African movement of people and organisations working for justice, peace, and dignity. He also serves as a Trustee of INTRAC based in Oxford, UK and an Advisory Board Member of Disrupt Development based in Amsterdam, Netherlands. He is a Core Team Member, of the Reimagining INGOs (RINGO) systems change initiative. Charles also serves as the Head, Capacity Development Unit at the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI). He is a member of the Development Studies Association, United Kingdom, a</p>

				certified Change the Game Academy Master Trainer and an IFC- Learning and Performance Institute Trainer.”
17	Salifu Issifu Kanton	Expert interview		After completing a bachelor in Integrated Development studies and a master in Development Management at the University for Development Studies in Tamale, Ghana, Salifu has been working in the Ghanaian aid sector since 2002 focussing in particular on gender equality & social justice within the Ghanaian context.