Preserving the Colonial Other

A postcolonial discourse analysis of the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals

Uppsala University
Fall semester of 2016
Development Studies C
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Word count excluding appendix: 13952
Number of pages including appendix: 47
“where colonialism left off, development took over”

(Kothari in Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 150).
1. Introduction
In an attempt to move away from paternalistic tendencies in development work and create more equal relationships between development actors, the discourse of “partnership” has come to pervade most of the development discourse since the 1990s (Eriksson Baaz, 2005:3,6). Consequently, most of development institutions such as the UN, World Bank and NGOS have emphasized that development aid should in fact be carried out between “partners” (ibid).

In her dissertation, Eriksson Baaz (2005) conducts a postcolonial analysis in a Tanzanian context. She finds that colonial discourses of evolution and “otherness” still affect the way in which the Scandinavian development workers (DWs) construct their identity (the Self) in relation to the Tanzanian partners (the Other). Evidently, equal and non-paternalistic relationships do not make up the reality of relationships in development aid contexts.

If colonial discourses can be found in the practice of development work, can they also be found in the shaping of the development agenda? Whose voices dominate development concerns? From whom to whom is development being done?

1.1 Aim, research question and method
According to Cheryl McEwan (2009:180), a postcolonial scholar, the UN has been an important architect of development knowledge through the formulation of the recently expired Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Within the field of development, hardly any meeting, proposal, etc. go without mentioning the goals (Saith, 2006: 1183). In September 2015, the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been agreed upon. These goals reflect the contemporary development knowledge and will set the development framework for the next fifteen years. Multiple aspects of the MDGs have been subjected to strong criticism. One significant critique is that the MDGs reveal the uneven power relations within development (McEwan, 2009: 181p). Realities and regimes of truth based on Northern knowledge are reproduced through the goals, which determines how countries and people are represented and shapes development interventions (ibid). Contemporary scholars such as Cheryl McEwan, Maria Eriksson Baaz, Arturo Escobar, etc. examines this relationship both theoretically and empirically drawing on significant postcolonial scholars like Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak (see for example ibid: 62pp).
McEwan (2009: 254) emphasizes that “modern-day” phenomena are not disconnected from history. Therefore, an increased dialogue between postcolonial theory and development studies is encouraged (ibid: 3). The first’s critique about how we speak and write about the world, together with the second’s concern about material realities of global inequalities can contribute to development studies that are postcolonial both in theory and in practice (ibid). As such, possibilities for new epistemological and methodological approaches are created, moving away from taking the global North as a theoretical and normative benchmark for theorizing and talking about people in the South (ibid: 252).

Moreover, students of development studies have examined whether colonial discourses can be found in the development aid context. For instance, Magdalena Stenlund from Uppsala University examines in her bachelor thesis Selling the Colonial Other (2016: 2) whether “postcolonial discourses can be found in the communication material development NGOs use to attract donations and volunteers among the western public”.

Inspired by the scholars above, the aim of this thesis is to examine whether colonial discourses can be found in documents related to the MDGs and SDGs. The documents will be read through the lens of postcolonial theory, using the method and tools of Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA). Furthermore, to avoid a biased interpretation of the material I shall also examine how the goals and their documents are related to counter discourses. My research question is thus:

- Are colonial discourses present and reproduced in official documents related to the MDGs and SDGs? In what way? Can counter discourses be found?

The analytical framework used is based on postcolonial theory and is highly inspired from Maria Eriksson Baaz’s dissertation named above. Further, this thesis shares anthropologist Arturo Escobar’s (2012: 6) view of development as a “historically produced discourse”. McEwan (2009: 11) also argues for the importance of problematizing language when approaching development. Consequently CDA is a highly adequate choice of method.
Finally, I argue that a postcolonial analysis of the MDGs and SDGs is needed because:

1) The negotiations leading up to the goals and their ratification involve many important development actors. One strong issue voiced by critiques of the MDGs is the lack of democracy and presence of “poor countries’” voices in international arenas of political, economic, environmental, etc. decision making processes (Saith, 2006: 187). Further, the development institutions involved in the shaping of the goals (UN, IMF, WB, etc.) have enormous power in putting forward dominant spatial imaginations of other countries and peoples, which help them provide “truths” of economic growth, etc. (McEwan, 2009: 29). Analyzing them simplifies thus the task to uncover unequal power relations in the development context and how these affect the conceptualization and development and its framework.

2) The MDGs and SDGs’ purpose is to guide international development framework (Brian Carant, 2016: 2). They will be applied on global, national and local levels. They penetrate hence major aspects of society and risk to reproduce unequal power relation.

3) Fukuda- Parr (2016: 43) argues that the SDGs tackled many of the shortcomings of the MDGs. To state one important example, the process of formulating and ratifying the SDG differ greatly from the process concerning the MDGs. According to Carrant (2016: 11) the vocal inclusion of marginalized groups in the preparation of the new goals was much greater than in the previous case. However, little research has been done on how the SDGs relate to colonial discourses, which is why I find it interesting and important to examine.

1.2 Limitations
Colonialism was a heterogeneous project. As such a generalization of the full exercise of colonialism should be avoided. The ways in which colonialism was conducted and experienced varied greatly across time and place. Relationship of power did not go uncontested. Local cultures challenged, affected and absorbed the cultural practiced of development in different ways (McEwan, 2009: 166). However, due to space limitations, not all different experiences of colonialism can be touched upon. There
are some general colonial discourses and representations that are relevant for this study, only these will be focused on.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 History of the development discourse
Björn Hettne (2008: 11) stresses upon the distinction between dominating and counterpoint discourses of development. There is thus not one discourse of development there are many tracing back to the 18th century and the rationalist idea of progress. However, my focus is mainly on the discourses operating from the mid 20th century and forward. During that period of time, the notion of development was subject to changes in its aims and methods that are important to understand the processes that led up to the MDGs and SDGs.

Post-WW2
The end of WW2 marked a new bipolar world order, although multilaterally managed through the international economic institutions: the World Bank and the IMF. The UNs birth in 1945 was also of big importance for the new international dynamics (ibid: 41). The colonial powers tried to legitimize their further exercise of state power over people they perceived as different with the concept of development, but failed (Cooper, 2002: 36p). More and more countries gained independence. The ground for international development aid was set by both superpowers (the Soviet Union and the US) who fought over influence in what was came to be called the “Third World” (Hettne, 2008: 44pp). At that time, development was equalized with economic growth and was seen as “automatic” in the industrialized “First World”. The development discourse became more and more concerned with “Third World problems” (ibid). As Truman said in his inauguration speech 1949:

“More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. (…) Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve suffering of these people. (…) I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. (…) Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge” (Escobar: 2012:3, my emphasis).
This quote reflects the hegemonic vision in the circles of power by the 1950s (ibid:4): A complete restructuring of the “underdeveloped” world was needed to reach “high levels of industrialization and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth (…), and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values (ibid, my emphasis)”. This is what characterized “advanced” societies. A “big push” of capital, science and technology that the “West” already possessed were requirements to become “advanced” (ibid).

**Post-Cold War**

To continue, the end of the Cold War marked other important structural changes in the international arena. With the fall of the Berlin wall came the rise of the US hegemony. Neoliberalism and globalization dominated the development discourse. The Bretton Woods institutions were appointed (in accordance with the White House) the management of universal political economy. This system is best known as the *Washington Consensus* (Hettne, 2008: 53, 59). As such, development meant increased competitiveness and adaptation to the global economy and the market (ibid: 60). Nevertheless, hopes that came with the new world order succumbed to the reality tinged by declining aid, increasing inequalities (both within and among states), conflict and unequal power relations created and sustained through the international organizations (Seyedsayamdost, 2015: 517). Consequently, alternative discourses to the hegemonic view of development gained strength (ibid). During the 1990s the UN (especially the UNDP) struggled to combat the hegemony of the Washington Consensus through the discourse of *Human Development* (Hettne, 2008: 61).

Finally, in the start of the new millennium, great opposition to globalization emerged from inside the Bretton Woods institutions and from the civil society, e.g. the protests in Seattle (ibid). The critiques were mainly grounded on the fact that the benefits of globalization were unevenly distributed and that blueprint solutions could not be proposed to all economic problems. *Good Governance, Social Capital* and an increased emphasis on *poverty reduction* became central issues of development (ibid: 62).
In September 2000, the millennium declaration was agreed upon by a majority of the heads of states in New York (Hettne, 2008: 67). The actual eight goals, 18 targets and more than 40 indicators were first pronounced in a (quite criticized) report promulgated by the UN, OECD, IMF and World Bank in October 2000 (Saith, 2006: 1170; Seyedsayamdost, 2015: 517).

The MDGs reflect the norm that emerged in the post-Cold War context: global poverty eradication. Eradicating poverty became hence the ultimate goal – if not the synonym of development (Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011; Seyedsayamdost, 2015:515). Throughout her article, Seyedsayamdost argues that the consensus on global poverty reduction as the ultimate end of development was in fact both a moral and strategic response to “crises of relevancy within the international realm” (ibid: 518).

Organizations that emerged post-WW2 found their legitimacy highly questioned after the Cold War. The World Bank became highly criticized both internally and by the civil society. The UN was subjected to strong criticism due to multiple failures in resolving regional and local conflicts peacefully (ibid: 518). Also, many conservative governments in important Northern countries were replaced by left-of center parties, which also affected an increase emphasis on poverty reduction. The UK was one of those counties. After facing the big development aid scandal, they were central actors in the fight to make global poverty eradication central goal of global development (ibid). Finally, a reshuffling of high-level personnel between the UN and World Bank etc. influenced the emergence of this norm (ibid).

All the reasons mentioned above culminated in the shaping of poverty reduction as the ultimate end of development. These enabled thus international organizations facing a crisis of relevancy to further justify their existence (ibid: 519). The goals are numeric, simple, based on tangible and quantifiable outcomes. In sum, they are made to fit on a business card (Fukuda-Parr, 2016:49). I summarize here the main critiques directed towards the MDGs:

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1 A complete list of the MDGs and SDGs can be found in the appendix.
2 I would argue that this sentence relates to the idea of sustainable development as an
1) The World Social Forum criticizes the MDGs’ approach for being “top-down” and technocratic. The goals reflect the idea that development is to be achieved by the methods of the economically dominant countries. As a consequence, alternative norms and values are considered as barrier to development (Brian Carant, 2016: 10).

2) The MDGs do not provide a global template. Rather, they suggest that development is a process restricted to the “developing world”. It is in other words merely the North agenda for the South (Saith, 2006:1184pp).

3) The goals, targets and indicators are (I) too narrow an (II) quite unambitious and conservative. The (generally) rising levels of inequality and socio-economic exclusion are not at all reflected upon in the goals (ibid). To exemplify, important issues such as redistribution of land, mental health, migration and child labor are not sufficiently emphasized (ibid). Further, the scopes of the targets are questionable. Saith exemplifies by asking: “Why should the world be satisfied, after fifteen years of effort, with reaching universalization only of primary education?” (Ibid: 1187).

4) The architecture of the MDG frame, in terms of design and of the alternative issues that it eschews, is biased to the global North’s aspirations. For instance, questions are raised in the setting of targets, suggesting that manipulation of statistics plays a significant role in the institutionalization of targets (ibid: 1174).

5) The goals, targets and indicators do not take into account economic inequalities between the global North and South.

6) The substantial absence of (I) democracy in international arenas if decision making, and (II) the voices of countries in the South in these activities (ibid).

In sum, the MDGs are flawed on many levels. Consequently they do not embrace the complexity of development and reduce it to poverty eradication (ibid: 1188).

1.3.3 SDGs
After three years of negotiations, in September 2015, the SDGs were agreed upon at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. The 17 goals and 169 targets represent the development framework for the next fifteen years. As Fukuda-Parr (2016:43) argues, the SDGs’ concept, aim and politics diverge from the MDGs. One substantial change
is the incorporation of a new discourse: that of sustainability (Brian Carant, 2016:13). The architecture of the SDGs is also different from that of the MDGs. At the decennial Rio+20 conference in 2012, the establishment of a 30-member Open Working Group (OWG) was called for. The group was designed to prepare a “fair, equitable and balanced” suggestion for the SDGs. Moreover, a 27-member “High-level Panel” was given the task to monitor the OWG (ibid: 11). Since a strong critique of the MDGs was the lack of vocal inclusion of marginalized sectors, the UN invited governments, NGOs, think-thanks, academics and civil society from around the world to many consultations concerning the new framework (ibid). Consequently, a document called *A Million Voices: The World We Want*, was released in 2013, summarizing the consultations facing the coming formulation of the SDGs. Further, the UN produced the website the *WorldWeWant2015.org* giving individuals the opportunity to rank the proposed SDGs and discuss them. The voices of those not included in the *Million Voices* documentation were thus gathered (ibid). In other words, the SDGs have tackled many of the shortcomings of the MDGs, including more groups in their formulations and broadening the concept of development and its scope (ibid).

Clearly, it is too early to assess the effects of the SDGs. However, although they reflect major improvements, some questions have been raised concerning their architecture. For instance, how communities were selected and the number of voices acquired from each country is not indicated in *A Million Voices* (Brian Carant, 2016:11). Are these voices really representative of the global seven billion? Further, voting patterns have been revealed to be unrepresentative for the general population, especially concerning voter’s education level: “(...) the current voices represent individuals with greater levels of education who are less likely to be affected by the perils of poverty” (ibid: 12).

### 1.4 Central concepts and definitions

Colonialism: Colonialism is not a European creation. However when I speak about colonization in this thesis I speak of European colonization dating from the 15th century and further. European colonialism was special for two reasons. Firstly, Europe expanded its control over 84 per cent of the earth’s territory by the end of 1914 (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 63). Secondly, the “science” of race i.e. the differentiations of people based on biological attributes, cooperated with colonialism
for the first time on a *global scale* (ibid). The perceived racial characteristics of people decided their position in the evolutionary ladder, legitimizing the rule over them (ibid).

Dichotomies: Sheryl McEwan (2009:12p) discusses different ways to categorize and rank countries in terms of how developed they are. Such categorizations are most often *not* neutral and illustrate “who has the power to decide which qualities and indicators are valued and which are denigrated” (ibid). Terms like the “First/Third World” “developed/developing” automatically reflect hierarchies and normative evaluations (ibid). Such binaries shape and reinforce unequal relations between North and South. The categories homogenize different peoples and places, carrying with them negative associations such as “stagnation”, “backwardness” (McEwan, 2001:94p) (ibid). I stand by McEwan’s argument on this issue and therefore use the binary North/South or global North/global South in this thesis. It is important to note, that this is a *metaphorical* and not geographical division (ibid). “North refers to pathways of transnational capital and South to the marginalized poor of the world regardless of geographical location (ibid).” Although these terms are not unproblematic, they are at the moment the least reproducers of hierarchies and normative evaluations (ibid).

2. Theory
Postcolonial theory is a conjuncture of different approaches (McEwan, 2009:34). Due to space limitations, the only aspects developed in this section are those constituting the analytical framework of this thesis. Importantly, post-colonialism does *not* refer “to an achieved state beyond colonialism” (Eriksson Baaz, 2005:33). Yet, neither does it suggest a plain continuation of colonialism (ibid). Henceforth, post-colonialism refers to “a *critical* aftermath” (McEwan, 2009: 17) meaning “cultures, discourses and critiques that lie *beyond*, but remain closely influenced by, colonialism” (ibid).

Postcolonial theory seeks to challenge dominant ways of understanding North-South relations (ibid: 27). Its aim is mainly:

“To re-examine the long historical, cultural and spatial record that has depicted colonies and postcolonies as the problematic children of European History” (ibid: 2)
Furthermore the focus lies in:

“Analyzing discourses […] including narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices; critiquing modes of representation (techniques of writing and speaking about the world). Question of identity and culture is at the center of postcolonial studies […]”(ibid).

2.1 Discourses of knowledge
As McEwan (2009: 4) states, it is hard to argue against the fact that the contemporary world has been strongly affected by imperialism and colonialism. Even though the direct colonial rule ended and new nation-states were formed, “the colonial” is everything but dead (Eriksson Baaz, 2005:33). On the contrary, the after effects are very much alive (ibid). Power dynamics that existed during the 15th century still shape the present global relations (McEwan, 2009:9). Postcolonial theory emphasizes especially power dynamics related to culture (ibid). The strongest power of the North is thus neither economic nor technologic. Rather, it is the power to produce and control knowledge (ibid: 165). This aspect refers principally to the power to “name, represent and theorize” (Sardar in McEwan, 2009: 165). As McEwan stresses, “knowledge is a form of power and, by implication, violence” (ibid). With controlling the production of knowledge comes the power of controlling the representation of other places and peoples (ibid: 9). A typical example is that of Oriental Despotism. To justify their colonial rule over India, the British had to create a suitable Indian past. According to them, India was once glorious, but now “lost in the past” and “brought to a permanent halt for want of mental liberty and individuality” (Metcalf, 1998:32). The British saw hence their presence imperative to civilize the lost Indians and teach them to commit to the rule of law. Interestingly, many of the “facts” the British presented about the Indian past were false (ibid).

The aspect of knowledge is central and will be given great attention in the analysis. Slater & Bell (2002: 351) emphasize that the distribution of knowledge has long been a “one-way flow” from North to South. Countries in the South are often perceived to be lacking not only independent forms of knowledge relevant to local context, but also to the global one (ibid). They are thus described as passive recipients, waiting for the access to the dynamic and inherently positive innovations of Northern technology and knowledge (ibid). Continuingly, they state that contemporary discourses of
partnership in development reproduce paternalistic North-South relations (ibid). Therefore, and emphasis will put on what forms of knowledge are perceived as valuable/not valuable in the documents related to the MDGs and SDGs.

2.2 Colonial discourses: Legitimizing the “white man’s burden”
Eriksson Baaz (2005: 34p) argues that almost all societies were marked by colonialism, the aftereffects of which still continue to shape contemporary identities. Therefore, colonialism should be viewed as a global process. Nonetheless, Eriksson Baaz recognizes some general colonial discourses relevant for her study. The conjuncture of these discourses, she argues, helped to legitimize the “white man’s burden”. These discourses are (1) the discourses of evolution and (2) the discourses “otherness” (ibid). Because of their generality in the colonial process, these discourses are central to my analytical framework and will be used as the main analytical tools.

2.2.1 Discourses of evolution
The discourses of evolution are closely related to the view of development as an immanent process. Grounded on the rationalist idea of progress and following theories of Social Darwinism, evolutionary discourses gained great influence during the nineteenth century and started to be applied to societies (ibid: 36).

“Just as the biological organism developed from simple unicellar to complex biological forms, society was assumed to develop from the tribe and family to the modern Western nation-state.” (Ibid)

Ergo, to follow a predestined path and to move forward from the simple and primitive to the complex and modern was a process intrinsic to humankind (ibid). The evolutionary process was divided in different stages that all societies had to pass. Nevertheless not all societies moved forward in the same pace. Different societies reflected hence different eras of the same, linear, evolutionary process (ibid: 37). The colonizers, occupying a higher position in the evolutionary ladder perceived their societies as superior to the backward colonized ones. Consequently, the “white man’s burden” came into being, its mission: to “civilize and develop the underdeveloped” (ibid).
Continually, the evolutionary discourses overlap with those of otherness. The perceived higher level of development brought the Europeans together and differentiated them from e.g. “Africans” (ibid: 39). However, through her interviews with the European DWs in Tanzania, Eriksson Baaz found that the evolutionary discourses coexisted with discourses of similarities. Tanzania was described as situated “behind, the time operating in the West” (ibid). The European DW can relate and identify with the Tanzanian situation since their ancestors also past through these stages. Further, child metaphors were often used in this context. The Tanzanian partners were ascribed childish features such as lack of maturity and irresponsibility – yet another way to put an emphasis on different evolutionary stages. Ergo, DWs differentiated themselves from the Tanzanian partners both in terms of level of development and in temporalities (ibid).

Finally, development discourses articulated in many international institutions suggest that capitalism and modernization is universal and inevitable. Other social realities are hard to imagine. As such, alternative knowledge or systems are dismissed (McEwan, 2009: 177p). Capitalism cannot simply be seen as an innocent system. Its colonial heritage is immense. Colonialism helped spread capitalism globally through the conquest, exploitation and possession of other people’s land and labor (ibid: 83p). Many economic development policies brought forward by e.g. the Bretton Woods institutions such as the SAPs or “free trade”, ignore the historical legacies that placed countries in the North and South on completely different ends within the global capitalist system (ibid: 129).

2.2.2 Discourses of Otherness
Scholars like Said, Frantz Fanon and Mudimbe have long examined discourses of Otherness and argued for the important role they played in justifying colonial domination and exploitation (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 45). Regardless of the heterogenic character of European colonialism, stereotyping was a common denominator, used to describe the colonized Other whether in the Americas, Asia or Africa (ibid: 43).

Interestingly, “othering” is often used as a way to strengthen the image of the Self. As such, the self-image of the “West” as a superior civilization was consolidated by the discursive production of the East as “the West’s inferior Other” (ibid: 43, my
emphasis). The West and the East were assigned opposing characteristics based on “racial” “cultural” or “ethnical” factors in a “systematized and hierarchical construction” (McEwan, 2009: 122). Theses characteristics take often the form of opposing binaries such as self/other, culture/nature, active/passive, male/female, civilized/savage, rational/historical, normal/abnormal, etc. (ibid). Interestingly, stereotyping in the form of these dichotomies is often manifested where there are great inequalities of power. They are used to maintain that social order and as oppressive tools – having very real, material consequences (ibid; Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 17).

Paradoxically the colonial project was torn between on the one hand: the “civilizing project” aiming to civilize the savage and on the other: the dependence on difference (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 45p). The colonized had to become almost like the Self but not entirely (ibid).

**From Racialism to Culturalism**

Moving forward, Eriksson Baaz argues that cultural identities are today shaped by “culturalism” or more exactly cultural racism rather than “racialism” (ibid: 47). Cotemporary differences between the Self and Other are thus explained by culture and not “race”. However, these differences still suggest the superiority of the North and inferiority of the South. Eriksson Baaz shows through her interviews how DWs often ascribed the Tanzanian partners characteristics such as corrupt, irresponsible, late, lazy, etc. Together with these characterizations however, came an emphasis on the fact that the difference was due to culture and not to the individual (ibid). In sum, previous racial border still shape contemporary cultural ones in the development context (ibid).

**The “omniscient Self” activating the “backward Other”**

To continue, typical to identity construction in the development context is the idea of the “omniscient Self” and the “backward Other”. Eriksson Baaz quotes a DW stating their frustration towards the Tanzanian partners’ lack of interest in “real knowledge” (ibid: 114). Further, the DWs perceived themselves as possessing special capacities related to democracy, equality and work ethics that they could transfer to the Tanzanian partners. Seeing themselves as more moral and open minded, the DWs
perceived their role as stretching beyond being an “adviser” to being a “role model” offering new ways of thinking (ibid: 112pp). Consequently, the responsibility for the failures of development is put on the partners and their deficiency, reinforcing stereotypes and reproducing relations tinged by paternalism. Finally, people in the South are often described as passive and needy, while people in the North are active agents and generous donors. Discourses of passivity have strong impacts on development policy (McEwan, 2009: 218).

**Discourses of Africa**

Representations of Africa have been tinged by ambivalence. On the one hand the passive, needy and childlike and on the other the savage and primitive. Contemporary representations of Africa in some development discourses are arguably very similar to representations from the eighteenth century. Individuals were perceived to be lost in the “tribe” within the “race”. To erase such differences, homogenous mass of people were created to which specific stereotypes could be applied. Regimes of truth and knowledge of the “African” was hence created (ibid: 136pp). Child metaphors were (and are still used) to justify the subjection of African people to regimes of power (ibid). Since “Africans” were like children, lacking the capability of exploiting their own resources, the role of “advanced” “mature” nations as guardians was justified (ibid). Eriksson Baaz showed for example how some DWs described Tanzanian partners as carefree, irresponsible and distrustful (ibid). Further, diseases were used to explain the “backwardness” of Africa. Again, “failures” in “development” were pinned on the people. According to the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) Africa’s declined share in world trade is due to the region’s location outside of modernity, development and globalization (ibid: 175). This analysis completely overlooks (1) Africa’s role in globalization, especially in terms of resources, and (2) inequalities within the global system (ibid).

**2.3 Critiques**

A common critique of postcolonial theory is its overemphasis on language. As a consequence, material problems and real people’s lives are hard to deal with since the theory operates on a level too abstract. Further, postcolonial theory rarely presents alternative solutions to real and urgent issues (ibid: 1).
However, understanding the discursive power of development is of outer importance. Language is not merely neutral words, the way we speak about something affects the way we act and justify our actions (ibid: 121). Development texts often use metaphors, images and are written in representational languages. As a consequence, negative stereotypes and misrepresentations are often produced and reproduced (ibid). Escobar (2012:9p) argues that the development discourse is produced under conditions of unequal power, which affects what forms of knowledge are dominant while other excluded. Consequently real interventions with actual consequences are justified (McEwan, 2009: 166). It is arguable (see e.g. Escobar, 2012:4) that the development discourse ended up producing its opposite – impoverishment and underdevelopment. The SAPs are a good example, they were motivated by Northern knowledge about what systems bring about economic growth and ended up affecting real people’s lives negatively (see e.g. McEwan, 2009: 99pp).

In sum, the development discourse is powerful and affects real lives. Development texts and images represent the world and the relations of power constituting it (McEwan, 2009:166). Ergo, a postcolonial approach to the development discourse, acknowledging the power of language and representation, is needed to reveal unequal apparatuses of power and domination in the conceptualization of development (ibid).

2.4 Counter discourses
As both McEwan and Eriksson Baaz argue, colonialism was not simply imposed on passive recipients. People subjected to colonialism fought, challenged, absorbed colonialism in different ways. Colonial discourses are therefore not only produced in the North and neither is the development discourse. Development theories and ideas are also formed and contested in the South (ibid: 30). Through the processes of colonialism and neocolonialism, Northern knowledge gained global pre-eminence. However, this does not imply the absence of alternative forms of knowledge (ibid: 198). “Traditional” knowledge was long perceived as obstacles to development. Today however, the importance of e.g. Indigenous knowledge has been recognized as part of mainstream development thinking (ibid). The fight of postcolonial feminists to end white feminists’ representation of women in the South is also an important example of counter discourses (ibid: 200). Further, development as an imperialist project has been challenged while participatory approaches and the emphasis on the
“local” and on cultural diversity encouraged (ibid: 256). Important steps forward have been taken and must be recognized. Such steps will be searched for in the analysis.

2.5 Summary
To summarize, the aim of this thesis is to examine whether and in what way colonial discourses can be found in documents related to the MDGs and SDGs. This section presented (1) Domination of “one-way” flow of knowledge (2) discourses of evolution and (3) discourses of Otherness. The occurrence of these three discourses in the material would suggest the presence of colonial discourses. Henceforth, the material will be carefully read through the lens of postcolonial theory, trying to identify in what way these documents relate to these three points.

(1) Discourses of knowledge: which forms of knowledge are accepted and which are excluded in the documents? Do they suggest a “on way” distribution of knowledge from North to South? Which actors dominated the conceptualization of the MDGs and SDGs? Do they suggest that the answer to resolving development issues lies in Northern technology and knowledge? These are examples of question that will be asked to the material.

(2) Discourses of evolution: Does the notion of development as an immanent, evolutionary process with a predestined path occur in the documents? Do spatial metaphors and temporality such as concepts like the “developing world” occur often? Such concepts suggest that development concerns the countries “out there”. Further, they imply the existence of a final stage of development where developing countries at last realize their inherent potential (ibid). Countries of the North become hence disconnected to the process of developing as the final stage of an evolutionary hierarchy has already been reached (McEwan, 2009:11).

(3) Discourses of Otherness: Do discourses of Otherness occur in the material? Focus will lie on how countries and people in the South through, per alia, the occurrence of dichotomies such as (1) the culturally different Other (2) the omniscient Self/Backward Other and hence the North’s perceived need to activate the passive
other; and (3) Discourses of Africa. To whom are the MDGs and SDGs directed? Who is the object of development?

3. Method
In this thesis, Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) will constitute the methodological framework. However, a general introduction to discourse theory will be given before continuing with a description of CDA.

3.1 Discourse analysis
First of all, discourses are defined as:

“(…) the spoken or written practices or visual representations that characterize a topic, an era, or a cultural practice. They dictate meaning and upon analysis may indicate their hidden impact and the individuals or groups whose views have dominated at a particular point in time.” (Grbich, 2013: 245)

All different ways of conducting discourse analysis are grounded on certain ontological and epistemological premises. Firstly, all share a social constructionist worldview (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 10pp). As such, the positivist assumption that our knowledge about the world can be treated as objective truth is dismissed (ibid). Reality does not exist “out there”; rather it is a product of discourses– of our ways of experiencing, learning, imagining and categorizing the world (ibid, McEwan, 2009:122). The role of language is of crucial importance in this process. Reality is accessed and given meaning through language and our ways representing it (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 15). Ergo, discourses are of constitutive character. Further, discourses are contingent – their meanings are not fixed. Since humans are historical and cultural beings our knowledge and worldviews are products of human interactions, maintained by social processes (ibid: 12). Within a certain worldview, certain actions become natural while other are dismissed as unthinkable (ibid).

To continue, a second key aspect of discourses is power and its link to language. For instance, the discourse of madness, Michel Foucault argues, affects what we perceive consists a mad person, how they should be treated and who should have the legitimate right to treat them (Bryman, 2008: 474). Consequently, the control of discourses enables the control over people’s thoughts and action (Grbich, 2013: 246). Because
discourses are contingent, constant struggle is under way to establish one’s own desired semantic definition as the dominant one (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2007:36). Consequently, power relations are embedded in and sustained by discourses. Discourse analysis, with its \textit{critical} approach is an effective analytical tool to unravel power relations in society and to examine which ways of knowing are accepted while other marginalized (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 10).

Finally, discourse analysis intertwines theory and method. Therefore, as a researcher one must accept the basic philosophical assumptions in order to use discourse analysis as method in an empirical study (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 11). Luckily, postcolonial theory and discourse analysis are compatible since discourses are given substantial attention in postcolonial theory. The very \textit{idea} of development is challenged because of its ethnocentric project and roots in colonial discourses (McEwan, 2009: 120). Ergo, discourse analysis helps us raise important questions about the power of representation, what “experiences” and whose “learning” has been dominated in understanding of development and the world (ibid).

\subsection*{3.2 Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)}
Fairclough grounded CDA on the premise that discursive practices –the practices through which texts are produced and consumed – are important social practices, contributing to the constitution of our social world. This includes social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and meaning (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 55pp). Moreover, Fairclough stresses that discourses are \textit{both} constitutive and constituted. As such, they produce and reflect social structures (ibid). Consequently, there are moments of a social practice that are both discursive and non-discursive, working together in different kinds of mechanisms.

Moreover, discursive practices have \textit{ideological} effects- they contribute to the creation and reinforcement of uneven power relations between social groups (ibid). Fairclough criticized other scholars in the field of discourse theory for overlooking the fact that not all individuals and social groups have equal power to influence discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2007: 62).
In sum, CDA aims to (1) reveal the role of discursive practices in the sustainment of the social world, uncovering social inequalities, hierarchies of power and non-democratic patterns; and (2) commit to social change in line with more equal relations of power (Gbrich, 2013: 251; Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 57). Fairclough promotes the use of **linguistic analysis** of language in social interaction to understand the relationship between text and society (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 57).

To continue, Fairclough focuses on two aspects of discourses: (1) **communicatory events** – meaning the language use such as film, newspaper, etc. and (2) the **order of discourses** – meaning the (potentially) conflicting arrangements of different discourses and genres used in a specific social field (ibid: 65). Within an order of discourse, some discursive practices occur, through which text and talk are produced and consumed and interpreted (ibid: 60p). Both aspects work dialectically. For instance, the documents related to the MDGs and SDGs are communicatory events drawing on a system of order of discourses of development while simultaneously constituting and reproducing the system (ibid: 64). Through this process, the boundaries of what can be said and not are set. However, as we have seen, discourses are constitutive and contingent. As such, language users can change the order of discourses (ibid).

**3.2.1 Intertextuality and interdiscursivity**

“**Interdiscursivity** occurs when different discourses and genres are articulated together in a communicative event” (ibid: 65). Boundaries change with the articulation of new discourses or when different discourse types are combined in new ways. **Interdiscursive mixes** are thus both a sign, and a momentum of social change (ibid). Interdiscursivity is a form of **intertextuality**. Intertextuality refers to the fact that it is impossible to avoid using words and phrases that have been used before. Consequently, all communicative events draw on previous events (ibid). Here, a text can be analyzed as an **intertextual chain** – a series of texts, all incorporating elements from other texts (ibid). Ergo, all texts are influenced by- and in turn influence history (ibid). The MDGs and SDGs are consequently products of history that also shape history. If a high level of interdiscursivity is found in the analysis, it suggests that the development discourse is subject to change. Conversely, low levels of interdiscursivity suggest the reproduction of the already established order (ibid: 72).
Therefore, it is of interests to compare the two different communicative events and examine whether they suggest change or stability. This task is simplified by searching for counter discourses.

Continually, Fairclough’s CDA constitutes of a three-dimensional framework for research on communication and society. Here, three dimensions interact: the text, discursive practices and the broad social practice. The third dimension cannot be analyzed by discourse analysis solely because it involves both discursive and non-discursive elements. Thus, cultural and social theories should be added. This means, that to conduct a complete analysis of “development” as a social practice, one cannot only understand development as historically produced discourse and analyze it as such. For instance, economic theories, social theories, etc. should be added to the analysis. Given the scope of this thesis this task is impossible, even though its framework constitutes both of postcolonial theory and discourse analysis. Since my aim is to analyze communicative events the main focus will be put on the first dimension using linguistic analysis. It is natural that the second dimension will be touched upon, but it will not be the main point of focus.

3.2.2 First dimension: The text
Fairclough’s first dimension the text represents the linguistic features of the text, from which discourses are actualized (ibid: 61p). The text influence both the production and consumption processes. The tools that Fairclough suggests for a text analysis are:

- Interactional control – who sets the conversational agenda? How is the relationship between speakers (ibid: 72)
- Ethos- how are identities constructed through language (ibid)? This tool is especially relevant for pinpointing discourses of Otherness.
- Metaphors - Fairclough explains that metaphors “structure the way we think and the way we act, and our systems of knowledge and belief, in a pervasive and fundamental way” (Locke, 2004: 51). For example, depending on ones discursive frame, Saddam Hussein could be described as a “butcher” or as a “patriarch of his people” (ibid). Development texts are often written in representational language where the use of metaphors to create imaginative
worlds (e.g. “Third World”) is common (McEwan, 2009: 121). As a consequence, misrepresentations are often reproduced (ibid).


The grammatical elements need to be further explained. *Transitivity* focuses on the connection between events and processes and subjects and objects. Here, the issue of agency is relevant. For example the sentence “50 nurses were sacked yesterday” is of passive form. Here, the effect (dismissal) is emphasized while the process leading to it is overlooked. As such, the responsible agent is absent; the dismissal of the nurses was caused without a responsible agent (ibid).

Analysis of *modality* focuses on how speakers commit themselves to their statements. For instance “it’s cold” or “I think it’s cold” are different degrees of committing oneself to ones statements (ibid). *Truth* is one type of modality that will be focused on in this analysis. Analysis of truth entails analysis of statements where the speakers completely commits themselves to the statement and present a particular knowledge-claim as true. Consequently, the chosen modality affects the discursive construction of (1) social relations and (2) meaning systems and knowledge (ibid).

“Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge” (Escobar, 2012: 3)

In the quote above, Truman presents the knowledge-claim that the way to prosperity and peace is through the application of modern technical and greater production as true and incontrovertible. By doing so, he constructs a special social relation between the “modern” North and the “unmodern” South. The analysis of modality will be especially fruitful to examine the knowledge aspect of the analytical framework.

By analyzing grammar, taken-for-granted understandings in development discourses can be localized (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 154p). This is useful in the search for evolutionary discourses. To concretize, what I will do: the empirical material describes itself in a specific way. Using the tools of CDA and emanating
from my analytical framework, I will describe the empirical and extract other meanings from it than those in the foreground (ibid). By doing so, I as a researcher, distance myself from empirical material but must at the same time respect it by limiting my interpretations (ibid). I will attempt to do so by also searching for counter discourses.

The strategy of substitution will be used to conduct the linguistic analysis. Words acquire their meaning by differentiating themselves from other words (ibid: 123). When a sentence is formulated, some words are chosen while other not. It is through this process that sentences acquire their meaning (ibid). By substituting words with other words, one can explore how the meaning/nature of the sentence change (ibid).

Furthermore, the guidelines of interpretation offered by Grbich (2013: 252) will be used in the analysis.

- Strategies of placement will be noted. What are the headings, pictures, keywords, etc.? Discourses are also illustrated in pictures and images. For example, pictures of starving” African” children have often been used to appeal to people’s compassion. Not only does this mean the exploitation of children’s bodies; also the “African” child becomes a helpless object desperately needing the assistance of “affluent Northerners” (McEwan, 2009: 138).
- Who is depicted as powerful/passive? This point relates to the ethos tool presented above. Are insinuations to take power from people present (e.g. minimizing)?
- Whose voices are heard while others’ missing?

### 3.2.3 Second dimension: Discursive practice

This dimension focuses on how text is produced and consumed. This task will be approached by examining which processes the MDGs and SDGs went through before being consolidated. However, as already mentioned, this will only be touched upon based on already existing analysis that will be put together with the text analysis. Moreover whether interdiscursivity and intertextual chains can be traced by comparing the documents to each other will be examined. Regarding the consumption end of this dimension, audience research is usually used to find out how readers
interpreted the text. This task will not be fulfilled in the analysis. However, how the MDGs were interpreted will be reflected about based on how they are mentioned in documents related to the SDGs.

3.3 Discussion of method
Critiques against the strong emphasis that postcolonial theory puts on discourses has already been accounted for in section 2.3. Here, the study’s validity and reliability will be discussed.

Since this study uses discourse analysis as method, its validity is hard to determine due to the lack of measurable elements. However, the level of validity can be decided depending on the analytical tool. The analytical tool must be viewed as empirical indicators for the general phenomena that is to be examined. Are the questions I ask the material relevant indicators for the phenomena I want to examine (Esaiasson, et al, 2012: 216)? The validity argumentation circuits around what other scholars in one’s field have used as analytical tools (ibid). The tools I have chosen are based on Eriksson Baaz and McEwan but have been adapted to the aim of this thesis. They are thus based on theoretical frameworks already used by accomplished scholars.

Considering the reliability of this study, transparency is a very important element. Reliability regards the absence of unsystematic measurement errors (ibid: 57). Deficiency in reliability is often attributed to careless mistakes while collecting and handling data (ibid: 63). One flaw with the theoretical and analytical framework of this thesis is that it is highly dependent of my own interpretations. It is hard to guarantee whether another researcher would interpret the text in the same manner and thus acquire the same results as I. To prevent this, transparency is of crucial importance in the analytical procedure. I have tried to be as transparent as possible with the disclosure of the analytical framework and will continue to do so in the analysis. Moreover, the combined search of colonial discourses and counter discourses reduces the risk of a biased interpretation.

3.4 Material
The material has been strategically chosen for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive analysis. Equivalent documents related to the MDGs and SDGs have been chosen:
MDGs:  
- A better world for all  
- Millennium Declaration  
- Road map implementation  

SDGs:  
- A million voices: the world we want  
- Transforming our world: 2030  
- Agenda for Sustainable Development  

As mention in the background, the MDGs were grounded on a wave of international summits and conferences in the 1990’s that issued different goals based on the former global context (Saith, 2006: 1169p). In 1996, the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) drawing on various UN conferences, published its own International Development Goals (IDGs) (ibid). In June 2000, the UN, OECD, World Band and IMF issued jointly a report called *A Better World for All* that represent their unified vision for development in the new millennium. Although this report focuses on the IDGs, it is still of crucial importance to analyze since it involves the most important organizations and because it reflects the dominating development discourse that culminated into the MDGs. Also, this report was widely criticized by the civil society for being unrepresentative and for unjustifiably narrowing down the development agenda to poverty reduction (ibid). In September 2000 the heads of states signed the Millennium Declaration that was soon followed by a road map detailing the means of implementation.

There are only two documents related to the SDGs because the declaration and implementation documents were merged into one document by the General Assembly. The first document, is the summary of the consultations made globally, the ground on which the SDGs stand.

More material would have been fruitful for the analysis but would not have been feasible within the frame of a bachelor thesis. However, the chosen material covers many aspects constituting the development goals. This (1) simplifies the task of comparing them and searching for interdiscursivity and (2) enables a more representative and comprehensive discourse analysis of the goals. Moreover, they are official documents thoughtfully formulated. Consequently “spontaneous” statements of individuals cannot explain the occurrence of colonial discourses.
4. Analysis
The analysis is divided into two sections, one concentrating on the material related to the MDGs and one concerning the material related to the SDGs. In both sections, the occurrence of discourses of evolution, knowledge and Otherness as well as counter discourses will be examined

4.1 MDGs
4.1.1 Discourses of evolution
In section 2.2.1 the meaning of evolutionary discourses as an expression of colonial discourses was explained. Evolutionary discourses could be found on multiple occasions when analyzing documents related to the MDGs. In the Millennium Declaration, the heads of states reaffirm their commitment to:

“(…) making the right to development a reality for everyone (…)” (General Assembly, 2000: 4).

Development is in the declaration defined as a universal right, the strongest barrier to achieve it being poverty. This is illustrated on numerous occasions such as this quote from the road map:

“In order to significantly reduce poverty and promote development it is essential to achieve sustained and broad-based economic growth. The millennium development goals highlight some of the priority areas that must be addressed to eliminate extreme poverty. These goals include commitments made by developed nations, such as increased official development assistance (ODA) and improved market access for exports from developing countries.” (General Assembly, 2001: 18p)

As can be observed in this quote, poverty must be reduced through economic growth for development to be promoted. Also, the dichotomy developed/developing can be noted. In section 2.5, dichotomies like developed/developing were identified as indicators of evolutionary discourse. However, a third category housing 49 countries could be found in the documents: the least developed countries (see for example ibid: 3). I would argue that the distinction between developed, developing and least developed countries enhances the argument that development is seen as a linear evolutionary process. The categories suggest the existence of a final stage of development that some countries already have achieved. Some, the developing
countries, are moving forward towards the end goal. The remaining countries named least developed, are only described as being the ones with the lowest levels of development. As such, the fact that they might be moving at any direction at all is not recognized. An evolutionary view of development was also manifested in the following quote:

“Providing for limited, time-bound protection of new industries by countries that are in the early stages of development” (ibid: 27)

As mentioned in 2.2.1 the evolutionary process of development understood as divided in different stages that all societies have to pass. The quote above suggests precisely this by implying the existence of “early stages” of development that some countries pass through.

To continue, it is clear that the MDGs are part of an intertextual chain. Their architecture is both a product of the former global context of the 1990’s and a shaper of the following ways of understanding development. This is particularly illustrated in the ways a “people centered approach” is emphasized and in how the documents handle globalization and growth. Throughout all documents, there is an emphasis on the need to revise the trends of globalization and work to make its benefits more inclusive:

“(…) ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people (…) at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed.”
(General Assembly, 2000: 2)

However, globalization and the capitalist system, emphasizing the role of the market are never really questioned. Rather globalization is regarded as natural and there is no sign that the future might hold an un-globalized world. Further, strategies aimed at strengthening the role of trade in development are encouraged. For instance facilitating Southern products to gain market access by eliminating trade barriers (e.g. General Assembly, 2001: 27). Finally, the Millennium Declaration reflect aspirations to create a
“(...) shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable” (General Assembly, 2000: 2).

However, it is clear that the ones needing to “develop” are the “developing countries”, as can be illustrated in the quote below:

“These efforts must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition (…)” (ibid).

Mostly, Northern countries are only mentioned in the documents when it is explained how they can and should assist the “development” of Southern countries. Moreover, goal eight of the MDGs “Develop a global partnership for development” (General Assembly, 20001: 58) is the only one directed to both “developed” and “developing”. To summarize, evolutionary discourses occurred in the material, which suggest that development is still perceived to concern countries “out there”.

4.1.2 Discourses of knowledge
Discourses concerning knowledge could be found in documents related to the MDGs. First of all, poverty reduction is emphasized as the deepest priority in all three documents. Moreover, the words “poor people”, “poor countries” or “the world’s poor” are commonly used (see e.g. ibid: 19). However, there is no clear definition of poverty in any of the documents. It is emphasized in the road map that all goals concern poverty reduction. However the two targets of the first MDG “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” (ibid: 56) are the only one directed towards extreme poverty.

“Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger” (ibid).

These targets suggest a conception of extreme poverty based on the WBs poverty lines. McEwan (2009: 132) argues that development organizations often miss to define the concept of poverty and that it often only reflects the North’s assumption. Targets like the above suggest that the MDGs are based on an ambiguous concept that undermines the complexity of poverty and do not represent how people labeled as
poor personally experience issues related to poverty. In the quote below, it is illustrated that the targets presented in the road map were mainly shaped by international organization and not those affected:

“(…) consultations were held among members of the United Nations Secretariat and representatives of IMF, OECD and the World Bank in order to harmonize reporting on the development goals in the Millennium Declaration and the international development goals. The group discussed the respective targets and selected relevant indicators with a view to developing a comprehensive set of indicators for the millennium development goals.” (Ibid: 55).

Moreover, as mentioned above, many of the strategies presented in the road map are based on the North helping the South. As such it is mostly knowledge produced in the North that is accentuated. This is probably best illustrated by the quote below:

“Vast regions of the world are increasingly lagging behind in connectivity and access to global information flows and knowledge and are thus marginalized from the emerging global knowledge-based economy. (…) While in the United States nearly 60 per cent of the population are online, the percentage of the population online is only 0.02 per cent in Bangladesh (…)” (Ibid: 31).

Further, technological transfer from North to South and foreign investment are viewed as crucial for increased growth and levels of development, especially in Africa. The quotes below illustrate, inter alia, the special measures countries in the North must take to address the challenges in Africa:

“(…) enhanced official development assistance and increased flow of foreign direct investment, as well as transfers of technology” (ibid: 45).

An already presented quote is relevant to bring up again:

“In order to significantly reduce poverty and promote development it is essential to achieve sustained and broad-based economic growth. The millennium development goals highlight some of the priority areas that must be addressed to eliminate extreme poverty.” (General Assembly, 2001: 18p, my emphasis)
The language used the modality truth, discussed in 3.2.2. The use of the words “it is essential” instead of for instance “the UN believes it to be essential…” presents a particular knowledge-claim - that reducing poverty requires sustained and broad-based economic growth- as true and uncontestable. Consequently, the authors fully commit themselves to their statement.

Nonetheless, a counter discourse could also be identified. For instance, the creativity and importance of local solutions were encouraged:

“(…) poor households can be (…) through creative, locally driven multi-level solutions.” (Ibid: 21).

Moreover, the incorporation of regional knowledge in peacekeeping contexts was emphasized:

“Combining the motivation and knowledge of regional actors with the legitimacy, expertise and resources of the United Nations can enhance the international community’s work for peace.” (Ibid: 12)

The quote exemplifies the notion that knowledge produced by regional actors also contributes to the international community. However, it is most often emphasized how Northern produced knowledge can contribute to the South than the opposite.

In sum, contradictory discourses of knowledge could be found in the documents, which imply the presence of interdiscursivity. Firstly, statements that suggest a “one way flow” of knowledge from North to South that indicate the persistence of colonial discourses and unequal relations of power. But also discourses of knowledge that accentuate the importance of locally driven solutions, which suggest that knowledge produced in the South is also valuable. However, I would argue that the level of interdiscursivity related to the knowledge discourse is rather low. Consequently, the established order that values Northern knowledge over Southern is reproduced rather than changed.
4.1.3 Discourses of Otherness
In the Millennium Declaration, discourses of Otherness were not clear. Since the declaration presents the heads of states’ commitment to poverty reduction in the new millennium, it is hard to grasp a clear distinction between a Self and an Other. Moreover, the declaration emphasizes principle of human equality.

However, discourses of Otherness are manifested more clearly in the road map and in *A Better World for All*, especially in representations of Africa. In all three documents, there is a clear discourse of lack and need where “developing” and especially “least developed” countries are mainly characterized for lacking the capacity to overcome poverty and needing the help from “developed” countries.

> “Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most” (General Assembly, 2000: 2).

In the roadmap the image of a superior “developed” Self and an inferior developing Other can firstly be seen through the use of “worlding” metaphors (McEwan, 2009:128).

> “Human poverty indicators (…) have shown enormous differences among countries and between the developing and developed worlds” (General Assembly, 2001: 37).

This metaphor suggest that the “developed” and the “developing” belong to different worlds. Ilan Kapoor (2004: 630) based on Spivak’s arguments, discusses how the “worlding” of the South separates it from the North and enhances the perceived distance between them. Consequently, homogenizing stereotypes and of the South as a world of problems are reinforced. As mentioned in 4.1.1 globalization, growth, trade and the market are never truly questioned. The discussion in the documents circulates around how to make the system more inclusive without questioning its roots. I would argue that the authors’ lack of analysis over the colonial legacies embedded in the capitalist system reinforces colonial North-South relations and the misleading self-image of the North as disconnected from or “past” colonialism. On many occasion, such tendencies were apparent in the strategies suggested to “lift people out of poverty” (General Assembly, 2001: 3) in the road map. Although recognizing it cannot alleviate poverty, private capital flows is emphasized for promoting growth:
“Official development assistance (ODA) is still a key source of finance, especially for least developed countries that lack the infrastructure necessary to attract private capital flows. “(Ibid: 26).

Analysis of modality is once again of relevance. In the quote above, the authors claim that the lack of infrastructure is the reason behind low private capital flows in certain countries. There are no words such as “might be necessary” that suggest other explanation. Moreover, countries labeled as least developed are “blamed” for not “attracting” private capital.

I A Better Word for All, the international organizations suggest that they:

“(…) cannot afford to lose the fight against poverty. And we must be unshakeable in our unified desire to win that fight—for everyone.” (OECD, 2000: 3)

Here, war metaphors are used to describe poverty, suggesting that poverty operates as a natural independent event. The international organizations describe themselves here as warriors fighting for the people enhancing their self-image as active and capable.

To continue, discourses of Africa were strongly manifested in the road map. A whole section is dedicated to “Meeting the special needs of Africa” (General Assembly, 2001: 43). The section begins with explaining how the international arena’s engagement with Africa has been characterized by trying to find a

“coherent approach in dealing with the continent” (ibid: 43, my emphasis)

This sentence is almost comical. It reflects the overall notion of “Africa” as a passive continent, characterized by lack waiting for the North to help, assist, support and deal with it.

“It is essential that the continent embark on the path to sustainable development and achieve its goals of economic growth, increased employment, reduction of poverty and inequality, diversification of productive activities, enhanced international competitiveness and increased exports. “ (Ibid: 45, my emphasis).
I would argue that the sentence emphasized in the quote above suggests that Africa is to be blamed for not having *barked on the path to sustainable development*. Furthermore, it illustrates the notion of Africa as passive and needing to be activated, since all the strategies that follow involve the help and support from the generous and capable North (ibid). Consequently, Africa becomes the object in relation to the North as subject. Finally, pictures of black children occurred twice in *A Better World for All*: once under the goal: “Infant and child mortality” and once under “Maternal mortality” (OECD: 2000: 12,14). In section 3.2.2 it was explained how the use of such pictures exploited the bodies of black children turning them into helpless objects.

Interestingly, discourses homogenizing Africa are combined with a discourse that emphasizes different realities depending on context:

> “Support must be strategic, sustained and structured around the contextual realities of the country in question and must be compatible with its priorities and national agenda for reform.” (Ibid: 44).

Consequently, interdiscursivity is also present when it comes of discourses of Otherness. However, it is clear that homogenizing discourses dominate the ways in which Africa is represented by the documents, which suggests that the dominating order is ultimately reinforced rather than changed.

### 4.2 SDGs

The SDGs’ architecture differs greatly from the MDGs. With the aim of being more representative, the UN organized 88 national consultations in South, 11 thematic consultations and surveys inviting actors on all levels to participate. According to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2013: 3) the consultations involved more than 1 million people across all backgrounds.

#### 4.2.1 Discourses of evolution

Interestingly, when examining whether evolutionary discourses could be found in the material, high levels of interdiscursivity were noted. It is emphasized in the documents that the SDGs (unlike the MDGs) are universal goals directed towards the evolutionary process.

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2 I would argue that this sentence relates to the idea of sustainable development as an evolutionary process.
whole world (General Assembly, 2015: 3). This suggests a move away from the notion of development a process only concerning the world “out there” - an indicator for discourses of evolution. Throughout the material there is an emphasis on transformation as demonstrated by one of the titles. This is further illustrated in some targets that are clearly directed towards all countries, as exemplified below:

“By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries” (Ibid: 26).

Simultaneously however, evolutionary discourses could be found as illustrated in the quote below:

“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. (…) we wish to see the Goals and targets meant for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.” (Ibid: 3, my emphasis).

First of all, stating that all countries embark on this great collective journey, suggests (1) the presence of one development course that all countries pass and (2) that it is inherently positive. Furthermore the sentence reach the furthest behind first suggests that some are situated in an earlier stage of the development course, needing to be reached by those who have come further. This notion is further enhanced in the implementation document when the need to take into account different “levels of development” (ibid) is emphasized. Moreover, the distinction between developed, developing and least developed is also present in this material.

To continue, the document A Million Voices: the World We Want presents arguments against the prevailing economic system that were brought up during the consultations. As opposed to in the documents related to the MDGs, the irresponsible behavior of multinational companies that has led to increasing inequalities is brought up (UNDG, 2013: 20).
“Finally, (…) the lack of effective regulatory frameworks, justice systems and incentives can mean that the private sector may undermine efforts to improve environmental sustainability” (Ibid: 28).

In the quote above, there is recognition for the shortcomings of the system in holding the private sector accountable. The level of modality however is low. By using the words *may undermine* instead of e.g. *undermines* suggest that the authors do not fully commit themselves to the statement. Accordingly, the authors leave open the possibility that what they stated might be false.

Moreover, there was a demand for a paradigm shift in how production is structured and on an economic model that follows “sustainable consumption patterns” (ibid: 65). However, there are no goals that suggest *another* system, rather they all aim at making the present system more inclusive, equal and sustainable. These strategies will not be argued for or against here, however they do suggest that a notion of the present system as *natural* since no other ways of living are truly brought up.

To summarize, high levels of interdiscursivity could be found in the material where evolutionary discourses and counter discourses operated simultaneously. One reinforces the notion of development as an evolutionary process while the other is changing it.

4.2.2 Discourses of knowledge
As in the previous sections, high levels of interdiscursivity when it comes to discourses of knowledge could be found in the material. As mentioned above, the SDGs were based on many consultations; with the aim of letting the people decide what kind of world it wants – hence the name *A Million Voices: the World We Want*. Throughout the document, an emphasis is made on the importance of listening to the voices of those labeled poor. As one of the 27 High Level Panel members said:

“We realized that the next development agenda must build on the real experiences, stories, ideas and solutions of people at the grassroots, and that we, as a panel, must do our best to understand the world through their eyes and reflect on the issues that would make a difference to their lives… we agreed that post-2015 agenda should reflect the concerns of people in poverty, whose voices often go unheeded” (ibid: 7)
The whole report is full of quotes from people from the consultations, which illustrate the commitment made in the quote above. Moreover, it shows that the High Level Panel recognized that people in the South’s experiences and definition of poverty might be different Northern representations of it. Interestingly however, the language used in the quote reflects the presence of transitivity. When saying *whose voices often go unheeded*, the agent responsible for overlooking the voices is absent. As such, the effect (the overlooking) is focused on while the process leading up to it is ignored. Consequently, the exclusion of certain voices, which implicitly suggests an undermining of knowledge produced in the South, is not taken responsibility for.

“Rich countries should be taking the lead in transforming to more sustainable consumption and production patterns, and showing how — with the right incentives — existing knowledge and technology can be harnessed to achieve this without threats to peace and social stability” (ibid: 40).

In the quote above, rich countries are encouraged to *take the lead* in being more sustainable and demonstrate how this can be done without compromising social stability. Arguably this illustrates the notion of a “one-way flow” of knowledge where it is rich countries that must show the way to the passive recipients of knowledge in the South. This type of knowledge discourses is clearer in the implementations document than in the UNDG document as exemplified below:

“The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies” (General Assembly, 2015: 5)

Here, a “bridge” metaphor is used to illustrate the divide between North and South when it comes to technology, without analyzing why such a divide might exist. Further, what exactly entails a knowledge society is not described. Furthermore, I would argue that the SDGs and their targets are based on a binary notion of gender and sex. None of the targets are addressed to LGBT-people and their well-being even though oppression many LGBT-people face was brought up in the UNDG document (see e.g. p. 148). Consequently, questions must be raised about whose experiences and realties were translated into goals and targets and whose are excluded. However,
even in the 2030 agenda counter discourses can be found, since the exchange of all types of knowledge is encouraged (see e.g. General Assembly, 2015: 26).

In sum, contradictory discourses of knowledge operated together in this section as well. The order of knowledge discourse is subject to changes. However, although the existence of different types of knowledge (such as indigenous knowledge) is recognized in the material, it is Northern anthropocentric, Northern knowledge-claims that dominate the ontological premises of the material. Different ways of understanding the world and reality are not presented.

4.2.3 Discourses of Otherness
Discourses of Otherness were also harder to find in the material related to the SDGs than in the material related to the MDGs. Considering that the UNDG document summarized voices from all around the world, this does not come as a surprise. When analyzing the MDGs, it was questionable whether people labeled as poor identified as such. In the UNDG document this statement was quoted:

“We have a different definition of poverty, of vulnerability. We do not say that we are poor, but we were impoverished” (UNDG, 2013: 67)

By saying that we were impoverished, the person from Colombia emphasizes that being poor is not an adjective they agree to be labeled under. Labeling people as poor has been a way people in the North have represented people in the South. By stating that they see themselves as being impoverished rather than poor, poverty turns from being used as an adjective describing the Other, to being a verb. Consequently, another actor is brought into the picture, and it is recognized that poverty is not the characteristic of people in the South but something some were subjected to by another actor. The mere fact that this quote was brought up in the UNDG document shows a move away from discourses of Otherness related to poverty. This is further illustrated with this quote, were the recognition of poverty as being a consequence of inequalities rather than a naturalized state is recognized:

“(…) to tackle global inequalities through reforms in trade and financial institutions, which represent some of the root causes of poverty.” (ibid: 40)
However, this counter discourse also operates with discourses of Otherness since people are labeled as poor (without defining the word poor) on multiple occasions in the material (see e.g. ibid: 19).

To continue with discourses of the culturally different Other. Here two highly incompatible discourses operated simultaneously in the material. First of all cultural diversity and identity was valued and emphasized on multiple occasions (see e.g. ibid: 69). However, cultural practices were also used to explain gendered-biased discriminations (see e.g. ibid: 18), which reinforces the notion of the culturally different Other explained in 2.2.2. Simultaneously, discourses of race could be identified. On multiple occasions statements similar to the quote below occurred:

“We emphasize the responsibilities of all States, (...) to respect, protect and promote human rights (...) without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex (...)” (General Assembly, 2015: 6)

While being aware that the quote above promotes the equal value of all humans – which is positive, I would claim that it reinforces the false notion that different human races exist. I would argue that saying for instance: we emphasize the responsibilities of all States to (...) protect all humans from racist discrimination would not have insinuated the existence of different human races. I would argue that the use of the word “race” manifests an intertextual chain, drawing back from the time when the UN charter was issued. Discourses around “race” might have been different and the use of it in this context is an example of how certain discourses are transferred into new communicative events.

5. Conclusions
The aim of this thesis has been to conduct a postcolonial discourse analysis of documents related to the MDGs and SDGs and examine whether colonial discourses and counter discourses could be found and in what way. The aim of this section is thus to summarize and bring forward the results from the analysis and answer the research question:

- Are colonial discourses present and reproduced in official documents related to the MDGs and SDGs? In what way? Can counter discourses be found?
The occurrence of colonial discourses was operationalized by the setting up of an analytical framework based on the work of McEwan and Eriksson Baaz. The analysis was divided in two sections, one concentrating on the material related to the MDGs and one concerning the material related to the SDGs. In both sections, an analysis was conducted to examine whether the three discourses (of evolution, knowledge and Otherness), constituting the analytical framework could be found. Evolutionary discourses of development could be found both in the material concerning the MDGs and the SDGs. Especially in the case of the MDGs, it was clear that “development” was a process concerning countries in the South since the goals and targets were clearly not directed to countries in the North. Moreover, the distinction between developed, developing and least developed was commonly use, suggesting the existence of a final stage already reached by some countries. Using words such as “early stages of development” further enhanced this view. Consequently, Northern countries are perceived to be disconnected from the process of developing, which helps justify their role as assisting other countries in their development. In the case of the SDGs however, evolutionary discourses did not stand out as clearly. The SDGs were openly directed to all countries, which suggests a move away from the notion that some countries have already reached the final stage of development while other have not. However, the language used still suggested that there only was one journey towards sustainable development that everyone had to embark on. Consequently, discourses of evolution have operated together with counter discourses in the SDGs, which have led some changes in the order of discourses. Henceforth, I would argue that development is still imagined as an immanent evolutionary process, its final stage being sustainable development. The difference however is that no countries have reached the final stage yet. Nonetheless, as sentences such as “different levels of development” were present, the opinion that some countries are situated in a more advanced stage of development is still present.

Moreover, it was clear that the knowledge produced in the North is the kind of knowledge that the MDGs and SDGs are grounded on. As in the previous case, this was clearer in the documents concerning the MDGs. The process underlying the production of the SDGs was much more inclusive than the one concerning the MDGs. However, it was still concluded that Northern development knowledge and means of
understanding the world still dominate the shaping of the development agenda. The lack of alternative systems to capitalism and globalization strengthen the argument.

To continue, discourses of Otherness were manifested clearest in how people from the South were homogenized and characterized as poor. Most striking was the discourses of Africa in the road map, tinged by homogenizations and stereotypes. The image of the passive African Other, needing the help from the capable and generous North was strongly reproduced in the document. I would argue that the notion of the North as subject, as the developer, is reinforced by both discourses of evolution and knowledge. The discourse of evolution, implicating the fully achieved development of the North enhances the perception of Northern development knowledge as “true”, which in turn reinforces the self-image of the North as competent; which finally justifies development strategies and interventions from the North.

To summarize, colonial discourses and counter discourses were found to be operating simultaneously in the material. Consequently, one cannot conclude that the development agenda is only affected by colonial discourses. Interdiscursivity could be found in the analysis, which suggests that the orders of discourses are not eternally fixed and are subject to change. As such, there has been a move away from some types of colonial discourses as for instance the idea that development only concerns the South. Nonetheless, as argued above, some colonial discourses were still present. As such, unequal relations of power between the North and the South together with misleading representations of the South are reproduced. I would argue that the lack of reflection over the colonial heritage of development enhances this reproduction. It is not the aim of this thesis to put forward an alternative and postcolonial development agenda. Nonetheless, as McEwan mentioned, an increased dialogue between the field of development studies and post-colonialism is needed to destabilize some taken-for-granted assumptions of development that still dominate the shaping of the development agenda. Alternative development knowledge exists, and by decolonizing the discourses and practices of development alternative methodological approaches of development can be brought forward.
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## Millennium Development Goals

**Goal 1:** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger  
**Goal 2:** Achieve universal primary education  
**Goal 3:** Promote gender equality and empower women  
**Goal 4:** Reduce child mortality  
**Goal 5:** Improve maternal health  
**Goal 6:** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases  
**Goal 7:** Ensure environmental sustainability  
**Goal 8:** Develop a global partnership for development

To view the complete list with targets and indicators:  

## Sustainable Development Goals

**Goal 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere  
**Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture  
**Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages  
**Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all  
**Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls  
**Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all  
**Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all  
**Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all  
**Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries  
**Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable  
**Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns  
**Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development  
**Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and had biodiversity loss  
**Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels  
**Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

To view the complete list with targets and indicators:  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals)
Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change