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Girls' Future is Girls' Future?

Tracing the Girl Effect in Plan International Sweden

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Introduction

Background

The understanding of the role of gender in global development discourse has shifted throughout the years, from the Women in Development (WID) approach in the 1970s to the current Gender and Development (GAD) approach. The WID approach aimed at “adding” women to development efforts and integrating them into global economies and production, while the GAD approach focuses more on social relations which create gender inequalities (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau 2000). Today, the attention to gender equality has increased and most development organizations try to, at least officially, integrate it as a perspective in their work (Dogra 2011). This is, just to name one example, reflected in the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) *Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Co-operation*, which aims at “ensuring an effective incorporation of gender equality as a cross-cutting objective in all aspects of development co-operation” (Development Assistance Committee 1999, 4).

While there is an agreement that gender equality is a social right, efforts to incorporate gender in development (similar to other fields) have been characterized by instrumentalist arguments (Carella and Ackerly 2017). It is said that empowering women, for instance, by ensuring them the right to education, economic property and paid jobs, is a necessary step to increase economic growth and reduce poverty. The instrumentalist perspective, that gender equality works as an instrument which makes development efforts more efficient, was central in the WID approach and received much critique for ignoring social structures which create gender inequalities and for reducing women’s rights to an “instrument” (Datta and McIlwaine 2003). Nevertheless, researchers argue that the instrumentalist approach is seeing a revival and is now frequently applied in most development and aid organizations, including the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Hickel 2014; Carella and Ackerly 2017; Roberts 2015). For instance, the *World Bank Group Gender Strategy* says that “Promoting gender equality is smart development policy”, since gender equality is “critical to development effectiveness” (World Bank Group 2015).

According to Schwittay, Roberts and Hickel, the growing adherence to instrumentalist reasoning can be connected to the “marketization of aid”. Due to corporations’ increasingly important role in aid and development, poverty has been reframed as a problem which can be solved by economic, technical and market-based means. From this perspective then, women

constitute an unexploited economic resource that needs to be utilized in order to expand markets and, hence, stimulate economic growth (Hickel 2014; Roberts 2015; Schwittay 2011).

Alongside the instrumentalist tendency is a growing focus on the role of adolescent girls in developing countries. This is illustrated by the rise of the concept “girl effect”, introduced in the mid 2000’s by Nike Foundation, and elaborated in the book *Half the Sky* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2009). Similar to the instrumentalist approach, the “girl effect” argument emphasises women as the world’s biggest unexploited resource, and that investing in girls is the key to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty. Supposedly, educated girls join the labour market, delay marriage and motherhood and re-invest their money in their family, which consequently reduces fertility rates and boosts economic growth and development (Hickel 2014). Nike Foundation’s launching of the “girl effect” and the book *Half the Sky* formed a movement which engaged actors as diverse as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Coca Cola Company, Goldman Sachs, and Hollywood celebrities. Consequently, the Girl Effect movement has had an immense impact on the development and aid discourse (Hickel 2014; Koffman and Gill 2013; Calkin 2015).

Several researchers including Calkin, Dogra, Hickel and Roberts have criticised the Girl Effect movement, the instrumentalist approach and the marketization of aid. In addition to undermining the idea of women’s rights by instrumentalizing gender, critics mean that it risks essentializing women and men. This because the instrumentalist argument builds on stereotypical ideas of femininity and masculinity, where women are constructed as responsible, risk averse and altruistic, and men as irresponsible and individualistic. This risks reinforcing traditional gender roles which places women in inferior positions to those of men. Moreover, the Girl Effect argument puts enormous burdens on women and girls, making them responsible for saving entire countries from poverty (Calkin 2015; Hickel 2014; Roberts 2015).

Research Question

Drawing upon the critical perspectives on the development discourse outlined above, this study explores a Swedish non-governmental organization (NGO), namely Plan International’s organization in Sweden. Sweden is an interesting country to study since it is often considered a pioneer in both gender equality and aid and development (Arora-Jonsson 2009). While there are plenty of NGO’s in Sweden that constitute interesting case studies, I have chosen Plan

since it is a very visible organization in terms of public campaigns and fund raising. It can therefore be expected to influence the way we understand gender and development. While new in Sweden, Plan is one of the oldest and most visible NGO's internationally, and it profiles in gender and children's issues (Plan A 2017). For the International Day of the Girl Child in October this year, the organization presented a campaign focusing on girls in development. In light of the discursive features described above, this campaign and its perception of girls' role in development is particularly interesting to study.

Accordingly, this study sets out to analyse Plan from the perspective of recent debates within gender and development centring on instrumentalist arguments for gender equality and the "marketization" of aid, focusing on the campaign for the International Day of the Girl Child. To help answer this question, four subqueries are formulated:

- What traces of a marketized logic can be discerned in Plan's work?
- What are the constructions of femininity and masculinity in relation to development?
- How do Plan argue for the need to focus on gender equality and girls; what traces of instrumentalist or rights-based reasoning can be distinguished?
- What are the potential risks imbued in the instrumentalist approach?

Previous Research

In this section I will briefly describe the previous research performed on areas which are relevant to this study. However, a more comprehensive review of theories and recent research that the study draws upon will be found in the theory-section that follows.

Initially, instrumentalist and rights-based approaches to gender equality in global development have been studied by Carella and Ackerly (2017), Datta and McIlwaine (2003), Parpart et al. (2000), who centre their respective research in the Women and Development (WID) and the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. For example, Carella and Ackerly argue that the instrumentalist arguments stemming from WID are seeing a revival in international development discourse, and suggest an increased focus on gender equality as a social right (Carella and Ackerly 2017).

Moreover, research has been done on the instrumentalist approach exemplified in the Girl Effect with focus on various aspects (Calkin 2015; Hickel 2014; Koffman and Gill 2013; Roberts 2015; Wilson 2011). For example, Calkin, Hickel and Roberts argue that the "business case" of gender equality, which can be seen in the World Bank, international

NGO's (INGO's) and the Girl Effect movement, has a neoliberal agenda which essentializes women and ignores historical and structural origins of gender inequality and poverty (Roberts 2015). Koffman and Gill's and Wilson's research centres on the postcolonial aspects of the Girl Effect and examine how it reproduces colonial perceptions of the Third World Woman and creates a Global North/South divide (Koffman and Gill 2013; Wilson 2011). More about these scholars' research will be described below.

Schwittay studies the "marketization of poverty", and finds that international development discourse has increasingly started emphasising corporations' and capitalism's role in fighting poverty (2011), and Richey and Ponte examine celebrities' role as mediators between capitalism and aid, and branders and sellers of aid organizations (2008).

A significant field of research looks at how instrumentalist arguments are used to advocate women's increased participation in peace and security matters (Eriksson Baaz and Utas 2012; O'Rourke 2014; Pratt and Richter Devroe 2011). For instance, Jennings examines the debate on women in peacekeeping operations and finds that instrumentalist claims are commonly used when arguing for an increase of women peacekeepers, since it supposedly will lead to more efficient operational missions. Hence, central focus lies on women peacekeepers as a means and not an end in itself (Jennings 2011).

Evidently, much research is situated in the global arena, focusing on international institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations, European Union and INGO's. However, no studies of research have been performed in a Swedish context, and no research has examined traces of the Girl Effect argument or instrumentalist or rights-based approaches to gender equality in Swedish NGO's. Instead research has for example centred on gender mainstreaming (Daly 2005; Rubery 2002), Sweden's feminist foreign policy (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond 2016), and the Swedish identity as a gender equal nation (Towns 2002). Hence, this study has a unique contribution through its focus on NGO's operating in Sweden, and can thus also shed light on how international discourses might be reflected also here.

Delimitations

In this study, several delimitations have been made. Firstly, the study is delimited to examine one particular campaign in Plan, namely the campaign for the International Day of the Girl Child. I perceive this rather extensive demarcation necessary since it enables me to consider further aspects of the material and make a thorough analysis. An increased amount of material might be said to improve the generalizability of the results but will have a negative effect on

clarity, comprehension and thoroughness of the analysis. The second demarcation has been made for the same reasons, and concerns my choice to focus the study on one single organization. It would have been beneficial to analyse and compare two different NGO's, but due to limited resources I have prioritized a thorough analysis on a smaller material.

Lastly, the third demarcation concerns the postcolonial perspective in which constructions of the Global South are examined in relation to constructions of the Global North. This is an extensive part of much of the literature on the Girl Effect and the instrumentalist approach and many scholars argue that colonial discourses keep influencing the politics of global development and aid, particularly given the increasing marketization (Dogra 2011; Hickel; Koffman and Gill 2013; Wilson 2011). For example, Hickel asserts that the Girl Effect reinforces the dichotomy between the Global South and the West, where the former is constructed as traditional, patriarchal and pre-modern and the latter as liberated, modern and developed (Hickel 2014). When conducting the analysis, it is clear that this perspective is relevant also in the material I have analysed. For instance, while stressing that *all* girls are exposed to discrimination, Plan's campaign tends to make a distinction between "us" and "girls", and write that "we" have to act now for the sake of "them" (the girls) (Plan E 2017). Thereby it is implicated that "we" are free and "they" are not, and that the oppressive norms, culture and religious practises merely exist in the Global South. Yet, the limited scope of this study meant that I would not be able to make a comprehensive analysis of the post-colonial aspect without undermining clarity and comprehensiveness of the analysis of the main research question.

Theory

This section outlines the theoretical perspectives on which this study is built on. First, it describes the different understandings of the role of gender equality in development that have characterized the Women in Development (WID) respectively the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Second, it addresses the debate on strategic essentialism and explains how it is connected to the Girl Effect and the instrumentalist approach to gender equality. Third, it explains the concept of the marketization of aid and exemplifies features which illustrate it, involving the role of transnational corporations and celebrities.

From WID to GAD and Back Again – Instrumentalism versus Rights

As several studies show, the instrumentalist arguments were evident already in the Women in Development (WID) approach in the 1970's and 1980's (Carella and Ackerly 2017; Datta and McIlwaine 2003; Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau 2000). The main objective with WID was to include women in development by integrating them into production. The approach stemmed from liberal-feminist theory, advocating equal opportunities for women and men, and the idea was that the incorporation of women into national economics would lead to enhanced efficiency and economic growth (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau 2000). According to Anna Carella and Brooke Ackerly, the WID approach, or the efficiency approach as they call it¹, is based on instrumentalist arguments for promoting gender equality. Gender equality and women's empowerment is understood as instruments to increase economic productivity and efficiency, something which supposedly will lead to development and reduce poverty. Moreover, the central focus lies on economics and production (Carella and Ackerly 2017). However, the WID approach received critique for ignoring the social structures which create gender inequalities. With Amartya Sen and his capability approach in the forefront a new approach was presented, Gender and Development (GAD). GAD puts emphasis on the relationships between men and women, focusing on gender as socially constructed. GAD also includes an intersectional perspective, recognizing class and race as shaping structures of inequality (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau 2000). In contrast to instrumentalism, the GAD approach relates more to rights-based arguments, trying to address the structures creating social inequalities. According to rights-based arguments, "transformation in legal, social and economic values, practices and norms are essential to development" and development cannot be measured only through economic efficiency (Carella and Ackerly 2017, 143).

Nevertheless, scholars claim that the instrumentalist approach was also reflected in GAD, and that it is now seeing a revival in the development discourse. Instrumentalist arguments are, once again, becoming dominant and the rights-based arguments are receiving less attention. This is expressed through the tendency to portray women as more profitable investments in development since they are assumed to manage their resources in a way which will benefit

¹ Different concepts, such as the WID approach, the efficiency approach, the Business Case of Gender Equality, are used to describe the approach where emphasis is put on gender equality as an *instrument* to development objectives. Nevertheless, in this paper, I will refer to it as the instrumentalist approach (to gender equality).

entire societies. Investing in women is “smart economics”, and perceived to be more efficient than investing in men (Calkin 2015; Carella and Ackerly 2017; Hickel 2014; Roberts 2015).

According to various scholars, this idea entails essentialist notions of women and men, which are frequently used in the instrumentalist approach on gender in development. Calkin (2015) write that the attention to gender equality as smart economics portrays women as responsible, self-sacrificing and altruistic, characteristics strongly linked to ideas of motherhood. That women are maternal, and put the needs of their families first, is seen as a natural predisposition which distinguishes them from men. In turn, men are perceived as proud, irresponsible and individualistic (Calkin 2015). Wilson also describes that women in the Global South are portrayed as more “efficient” than men, since women work harder and use less resources for their own needs. They are assumed to spend money on “good” things such as food and clothes for their children. In contrast, men are seen as irresponsible and lazy, spending their money on alcohol, cigarettes and entertainment (Wilson 2011). Consequently, women are assumed to re-invest their money into their families instead of spending it on themselves, something that supposedly will favour the society as a whole. Therefore, women constitute more profitable and less “risky” investments. A central idea within for example the Girl Effect and the World Bank is that investments in girls and women will more or less automatically lead to economic growth and development (ibid; Calkin 2015; Roberts 2015).

According to Roberts (2015), biological claims are sometimes used to provide evidence for women being less risky than men. Studies have been performed which show that high levels of testosterone can lead to more risky behaviour. Having more women in, for example, business and finance is therefore seen as an asset which can improve performance and profitability. Moreover, diversity is seen as generating the most favourable outcomes, since people of different backgrounds and sexes are understood as having different characteristics and assets (Roberts 2015).

As I will explain later, the depiction described above marks a shift in mainstream understanding of gender equality’s role in development, a shift which some scholars connect to the marketization of aid (Carella and Ackerly 2017). But first I elaborate on the issue of essentialism, which is a central subject in the discussion of the role of gender equality in development.

Strategic Essentialism

While the instrumentalist approach has received a lot of critique, it also – in part – reflects different approaches to gender and how to best achieve gender equality. Moreover, it reflects a dilemma in terms of gender strategies and various problems attached to them. The debate about instrumentalism touches upon the issue of gender essentialism; how one understands gender and how this affects policies and strategies, and the instrumentalist approach has received critique for its tendency to promote an essentialist understanding of men and women. While essentialism is rather a blurry scale than an easily identified position, it puts more emphasis on the differences between women and men, differences which depend on both biology and sociality. The sexes are often perceived to have diverse characteristics which make them suitable for different tasks and roles. Women are sometimes perceived as more caring than men and are therefore better suited for taking care of children. The goal of this type of feminism is generally not to eradicate these differences, but to reduce the unequal worth attached to men's respectively women's roles. Since men and men's capacities traditionally have been valued higher, the aim is to elevate the female characteristics (Gemzöe 2014).

In contrast, the constructivist or poststructuralist understanding perceives men, women, masculinity and femininity, not as results of biological realities, but as products of social constructions. For example, the identity of "woman" is not something that one *is*, it is something that one *does*. It does not mirror a biologically fixed truth, rather it is performed through discourse and social practises. The poststructuralist perspective questions the differentiation made between women and men and stresses that it is in the creation and recreation of difference that the gender hierarchies persist. In the centre of constructions of gender is ideas of difference and these locate the male and masculine in a superior position to that of the female and feminine. According to poststructuralist feminists then, we need to deconstruct gender identities and look for the processes where difference is created (Gemzöe 2014).

The issue of essentialism has been thoroughly discussed both in feminist and postcolonial theory, and as mentioned, the instrumentalist approach has been accused, primarily by poststructuralist feminists, of essentializing women and men. However, the debate of instrumentalism also concerns the concept of *strategic* essentialism and there has been a contradiction between rejecting essentialist notions of marginalized groups while simultaneously using them to mobilize resistance (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007).

Reflecting this contradiction, scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak – one of the most influential post-colonial feminist critics, who has worked with questions of representation, deconstruction, feminism and post-colonialism – introduced the idea of “strategic essentialism”. In an interview in 1984, she presented the concept which acknowledges that marginalized groups strategically can use existing essentialist notions of them in order to reach political goals. Spivak explains that the universal discourse is essentialist and therefore essentialism is impossible to escape. Thus, despite not necessarily agreeing to that a certain group is in a certain way, marginalized groups can use these ideas strategically. Nevertheless, she makes a distinction between strategy and theory, and asserts that essentialism is not desirable in the long run. If used as a theory, essentialism will inevitably objectify the subordinate and preserve inequality (Gross 1984; Landry and MacLean 1996).

The concept of strategic essentialism received persistent critique and Spivak later retreated from the idea. Many scholars problematize using essentialism as a strategy and criticize the tendency in the Girl Effect and the instrumentalist approach to essentialize women and men (Calkin 2015; Carella and Ackerly 2017; Koffman and Gill 2013; Roberts 2015; Wilson 2011). Writing from a more post-structural perspective, Calkin argues that appealing to the traditional gender role of women as primarily self-sacrificing mothers only works to discipline and control them instead of liberating them. It reinforces gender inequalities where women do the majority of unpaid work and are responsible for the home, children and elderly (Calkin 2015). Likewise, Wilson (2011) explains that it is rarely recognized that the contexts in which women’s efficiency is documented are based on patriarchal structures and institutions where women are *expected* to be self-sacrificing and efficient. Due to constructions of femininity and masculinity and the gendered division of unpaid labour, women are required to take responsibility for the family and the home, and to “sacrifice” themselves in order to be “good” women. Hence, it is unequal structures which make women more efficient. Therefore, the instrumentalist approach and the Girl Effect argument, which construct women and girls as less risky and more profitable investments than men, reinforces traditional gender stereotypes since their very logic is built on women sacrificing themselves, taking care of the family and home and doing the unpaid labour. Wilson argues that the instrumentalist approach and the Girl Effect argument does not sufficiently deal with the social structures which cause gender inequality, and their liberating effects can therefore be problematized (Wilson 2011).

Related to this, some scholars claim that the instrumentalist approach puts the responsibility of ending poverty on women. If given the opportunity, women are expected to end poverty not only for themselves, but for entire countries. This places enormous burdens on women and girls, requiring them to take responsibility for problems that they did not cause. It therefore shifts attention from more fundamental origins of poverty in the Global South, which many scholars claim involves interference of the US and Europe. Hence, it is argued that it offers a blueprint solution that ignores the complex causes of poverty (Roberts 2015; Hickel 2014; Koffman and Gill 2013).

Marketization of Aid

As previously mentioned, the instrumentalist approach to gender equality in development has increased during the last decade, and many scholars explain this partly by the marketization of aid. They identify a shift in development work where transnational corporations constitute new actors in the arena (Banks and Hulme 2014; Carella and Ackerly 2017; Roberts 2015; Schwittay 2011). Increasingly, transnational businesses are seen as part of the solution to poverty, and an understanding of capitalism as compatible with aid has become stronger. Poverty has been reframed as a “marketized” problem which can be solved by economic, technical and market-oriented interventions. The main idea is that creating new markets will increase economic growth which will trickle down through society and improve possibilities for people in poor countries. Instead of treating the poor as victims, they should be treated as entrepreneurs and consumers who, with targeted incentives, can start joining the production and thereby open up new markets. This is beneficial for corporations since it will create new workers and consumers, but it is also said to be beneficial for the poor since it will enable them to pull themselves out of poverty (Schwittay 2011).

In development research, an important feature of the marketization of aid is the engagement of celebrities who, according to Richey and Ponte, help brand aid and make it attractive, and constitute the mediators between aid and consumption. Celebrities’ involvement in social causes is not a recent phenomenon and examples extend back to the civil rights movement and the anti-(Vietnam) war movement in the 1960’s. More recently, celebrities have engaged in the struggle against poverty in, for example, the Band Aid and Live Aid concerts in the 1980’s, initiated by Bob Geldof, and the Live 8 concerts in the early 2000’s. However, celebrities have started to play an increasingly important part in the marketization of aid, legitimizing the combination of capitalism and social cause. Richey and Ponte, for instance,

examine the Product (RED), a brand founded in 2006 by celebrity Bono which encourages consumers to buy certain products in order to help fight HIV and aids in Africa. According to the study, Bono and the other celebrities engaged in the brand constitute “emotional sovereigns” who possess the legitimacy to reveal the “true will of the people” (Richey and Ponte 2008, 19). They become representatives for the ones who cannot speak for themselves. Moreover, they help branding the product in a certain way. In the case of Product (RED), the aim is to make the struggle against HIV and aids “sexy and smart”, and the celebrities are an important part of this branding (ibid, 24). According to Richey and Ponte, they help create the image that Product (RED) wants, an image which is assumed to attract consumers and make them choose to buy the products. The celebrities also work as validators of the product, that is, they vouch for the validity and accountability of it. This way, the aid becomes legitimate by the use of celebrities (ibid).

The Girl Effect campaign is an illustrative example of the marketization of aid. It centres around the instrumentalist arguments for gender equality, arguing that women need to partake in the labour market in order to increase economic growth. Women and girls in the Global South are treated as entrepreneurs who, with help from the West, have the potential to help themselves. According to the marketized logic, the solution to poverty in the Global South is framed in economic terms, meaning that opening up new markets and creating new workers and consumers will reduce poverty. Nike Foundation is the initiator of the campaign, which also includes other major corporations such as Coca Cola Company (Hickel 2014). The Girl Effect campaign involves several “A-list” celebrities, including Meg Ryan, Diane Lane and Eva Mendes, who participated in a documentary film, traveling to six low-income countries to explore the situation of women and girls (Half the Sky 2012). The Girl Effect, being a central example of the marketization trend, has therefore been the target of much critique, including essentializing women and viewing them as economic instruments/investments, ignoring more complex structures as reasons behind poverty and framing capitalism as the saviour of the poor (Calkin 2015; Hickel 2014; Koffman and Gill 2013; Roberts 2015).

Method and Material

This section starts with a description of the material selected for this study. It then continues to explain the method for examining traces of marketization, and the method for analysing traces of instrumentalism. The latter is discourse analysis, and I outline the method’s key

theoretical assumptions. This results in the formulation of a number of questions which will guide the analysis of the material and help provide an answer to the research question.

Plan's Campaign for the International Day of the Girl Child

Plan Sweden is the Swedish affiliation of the non-governmental organization Plan International, active in Sweden since 1997. It profiles in gender and children's issues in the Global South and is one of the older and larger NGO's internationally. It organizes various activities in order to raise money and awareness for children's rights, including sponsorships, charity galas, collaborations with companies, trips to developing countries, a blog, and campaigns on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube (Plan A 2017). Due to the organization's extensive activities and campaigns, the study is delimited to examine the campaign created in regard of the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11 this year (2017). This particular campaign includes sponsorships exclusively for girls, a three-minute long campaign-video on YouTube, and information on Plan's website on girls' situation in poor countries, in addition to Plan's efforts to improve it. The text includes information on girls' situation in countries in the Global South and Plan's ideas on what should be done to improve it. Moreover, it includes personal stories from four adolescent girls from different countries, who have all been affected by Plan's work and projects. These girls are seventeen-year-old Kevinne from Benin, seventeen-year-old Yeama from Sierra Leone, nineteen-year-old Beatrice from Tanzania and thirteen-year-old Timotea from Guatemala. In approximately one page each, the girls describe the difficulties they have faced in their lives, and how Plan International's work has affected them (Plan E 2017). To conclude, this study will examine the written information on Plan's website on the campaign for the International Day of the Girl Child outlined above, and limited aspects of the campaign-video.

Before moving on to the method, it is important to note that the material of this study is in Swedish and that I therefore have needed to translate it. Translation always comes with certain difficulties and specific meanings and nuances cannot always be translated from one language to another. However, the language in the material is rather straight forward and, hopefully, the translation will be adequate and transparent.

Method for Examining the Marketization of Aid

As stated in the introduction, one of the aims of this study is to try to trace marketization logics in Plan Sweden, as such logics constitute an integral part of the "Girl Effect" discourse. Due to limited resources, especially in terms of time, it is not possible to investigate this

question profoundly and conduct interviews with personnel at the organization. Instead, the analysis will be based on traces of marketization that can be detected by examining the organization's website, especially with focus on the campaign on the International Day of the Girl Child. These traces draw upon the theories brought up in the theory-section and include 1) the participation of private corporations in the organization as a whole, their role, visibility and potential influence and 2) the involvement and role of celebrities, focusing primarily on the campaign.

Discourse Analysis

In order to investigate the principal part of the research question, that is, what traces of instrumentalist or rights-based reasoning that can be discerned in Plan Sweden's campaign, I will rely on discourse analysis (and mainly draw upon Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse analysis, as it is described by Phillips and Winther Jørgensen). Discourse analysis is a suitable method for the purpose and material of this study since it focuses on the construction of meaning in relation to gender (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002).

In order to use discourse analysis some theoretical assumptions about social reality have to be accepted. Initially, this includes social constructionist theory which emphasise that our knowledge about social reality does not reflect objective actualities but rather different perceptions and constructions of it. More specific, discourse analysis is based on poststructuralism which accentuates language and discourse as constitutive of the meaning of social reality. In simple terms, a discourse is "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002, 1), and the idea is that discourses have "real" implications since they affect how we construct society. Discourse analysis therefore not only concerns theoretical assumptions about the creation of meaning, but concrete questions of why we organize the society in the way we do (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002). This is relevant in this study since discourses of the role of gender equality in development affect the priorities made in development efforts. For example, the instrumentalist approach's tendency to focus primarily on women and perceive them as agents of development can be expected to have particular consequences, both short- and long term.

According to poststructuralist theory, meaning is constructed through opposition and difference, that is, established by what it is *not*. In discourse analysis, the possible meanings constitute a field of discursivity and the excluded meanings of a sign in a certain discourse are created through its constitutive outside. An example, which connects to the discussion of

poststructuralist feminist ideas of gender illustrated in the theory-section, is the understanding of “woman”. The identity “woman” is constructed by excluding a constitutive outside which in this case is the notion of “man”. Through this process, the identity “woman” appears fixed, however, the constitutive outside “man” always threatens to disrupt the identity’s fixity. Hence, the meaning of “woman” is constructed through its relation to, and difference from, the constitutive outside, that is, excluded meanings. A discourse can therefore be said to be a reduction of possibilities. This is an important part of the creation of “Us” and “Other” – the one cannot exist without the other. Moreover, it illustrates how identities, both of subjects and groups, take shape. Certain symbols and meanings become associated to a certain identity, the differences within that identity are made invisible, and the identity becomes exclusive (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002).

Imbedded in the discursive field and the creation of social reality lies power, and how we perceive reality has consequences not only for how we understand a phenomenon, but how we act in relation to it, shaping politics in various ways. In a way, power is necessary to organize the world, yet it simultaneously excludes possible orders. For example, when a certain understanding of a sign appears fixed, natural and unchangeable it is called an objective, and the discourse hegemonic. Other potential meanings of the sign have been excluded. In relation to power, some signs are constructed as privileged over others, for instance man over woman, and the continuous constructions of difference keeps upholding power inequalities. However, according to poststructuralism, there is no final fixation of meaning and discursive struggles are constant. Meaning could always be articulated differently (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002).

The aim of the discourse analysis in this study is to examine the temporary fixation of meaning in relation to gender and development. This includes identifying how meaning is attached to girls/women and boys/men and how this relates to the understanding of development. A vital part of this is the identification of processes of exclusion and difference. As Jørgensen and Phillips write, discourse analysis requires the researcher to be transparent and systematic in the analysis so that the reader can follow the different steps taken towards the researcher’s claims. The demands of transparency and detail therefore often requires a smaller amount of material (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002).

As mentioned, the material selected includes a three-minute long video, and commonly, specific methods are used when analysing visual images. Yet, according to Laclau and Mouffe, all social phenomenon, including language, images and institutions, constitute

discourses (Phillips and W. Jørgensen 2002). This makes it possible to analyse the video and the written material using the same method. Nonetheless, the analysis of the video will primarily focus on text and speech, not on the visual.

In order to answer the research question, the analysis of the material will be guided by the following questions. Apart from the research formulation, these questions are based on the theoretical and methodological discussions brought up in earlier sections of the paper.

Initially, the analysis will investigate what constructions of masculinity and femininity, in relation to development, that can be found in the material. In terms of agents and obstacles of development, what signs are ascribed to girls/women and men/boys, including for example, responsible/irresponsible, self-sacrificing/self-centred, efficient/non-efficient, active/passive, collectivistic/individualistic and altruistic/egoistic? What traces of instrumentalist or rights-based reasoning to gender equality are connected to such meanings? Why, according to the text, should we support women and girls in development interventions?

Analysis

I will begin the analysis by describing the results of what traces of a marketized logic that can be discerned in Plan Sweden. These findings will be discussed before moving on to the main part of the study's research question. There I will describe how Plan Sweden argues for gender equality in development, drawing upon the framework produced in the method-section. The results will then be discussed in the final part of the analysis.

Traces of Marketization in Plan

Private Companies

As explained in the theory-section, one aspect of marketization is the involvement of private companies in development work, and the results of this study show that Plan Sweden cooperates with several corporations. The cooperation exists in form of sponsorships, where private companies can sponsor Plan with money in exchange for certain benefits. There are different types of partnerships which comprise different agreements and are based on the amount of money the company donates. The corporations who donate at least one million Swedish kronor per year have the possibility to influence and develop Plan's development projects, and Plan can pursue projects that lie close to the company's strategic goals (Plan C 2017). Moreover, sponsors are visible at Plan's website. For example, the current key

sponsors include the shoe-company Din Sko, the clothing stores Monki and NewBody and the employment agency Randstad, and their logotypes are visualised at the bottom of the home webpage. Further detailed information about the sponsors' involvement in specific projects could not be found. However, this study might have missed parts that could be relevant.

In the information on sponsorships on the website, Plan argues that companies' investments in the organization contribute to a more just and safe world, but that it also can help strengthen the sponsoring company. Plan writes: "While your support is very important for our development work, it shows your employees and customers that you take responsibility for our common future." Hence, becoming a sponsor is presented as beneficial for development objectives and for the company's own organization (Plan C 2017).

Celebrities

In the campaign on the International Day of the Girl Child, various Swedish celebrities have engaged, including actors and artists. The video created for the campaign is written and directed by actress Molly Nutley and in the video celebrities such as Sofia Ledarp, Frida Hallgren, Johan Hedenberg, Oscar Zia, Helena af Sandberg, Anastasios Soulis and Helena Bergström (among others) appear. According to Plan, the video was made pro-bono for the campaign and the celebrities gained no profit from participating (Plan B 2017).

In the video, the celebrities appear one and one in front of a black background, looking into the camera and telling facts about girls' exposed situation around the world. For instance, Oscar Zia describes how, every day, approximately 50 000 girls are forced to get married, and Helena af Sandberg explains that 44 000 teenage girls give birth every day. These scenes are interchanged with ordinary, non-famous Swedish children, women and men who prepare for a protest for girls' rights, which they participate in at the end of the video. The last scene contains Molly Nutley, looking into the camera, saying: "We have to do something now. Because it cannot continue like this." Since June 2017, Nutley is ambassador for Plan. According to the website, "the cooperation with the actress is a natural step to (...) mobilize power for girls' rights" and Nutley constitutes a "great role model and a strong voice for girls" (Plan D 2017).

Discussion of the Findings

The results above show that private companies play a role in the work of Plan by contributing with money and in return receiving visibility at the organization's website and opportunity to

influence Plan's projects. Companies who sponsor Plan are said to show their customers that they take responsibility for the future. Hence, the sponsorships are described as beneficial for both development objectives and for sponsors' own organizations. This indicates that private companies are perceived to be compatible with aid and development work since they are encouraged to cooperate with Plan. They are presented as legitimate actors in development and the fact that they will gain something by sponsoring Plan is not being problematized, rather it is being used as an argument for them to cooperate. Thus, it confirms the image described by Roberts, Schwittay and others, where corporations are increasingly accepted as actors in the development arena (Roberts 2015; Schwittay 2011). Furthermore, it can be interpreted as an illustration of the fusion between capitalism and aid, where capitalism is seen as part of the solution to poverty (Richey and Ponte 2008; Schwittay 2011). Consequently, regarding the role of private companies, this analysis shows rather strong traces of marketization in the organization of Plan.

Furthermore, the results show that Plan is characterized by the involvement of celebrities, especially in the campaign on the International Day of the Girl Child but also in the use of celebrities as ambassadors. Drawing upon Richey and Ponte's research on what role celebrities play in aid, the use of celebrities could be interpreted as a way to validate the organization's work. By participating in the campaign, the celebrities vouch for it and guarantee its legitimacy. Moreover, they constitute "emotional sovereigns" who represent girls in developing countries who cannot speak for themselves (Richey and Ponte 2008).

Additionally, the role of celebrities can be understood as part of the branding of the campaign and the organization. Taking the example of ambassador Molly Nutley, Plan states that she helps "mobilize power for girls' rights" and that she functions as a "role model" (Plan D 2017). This indicates that Nutley is part of creating a certain image of the organization which will help attract new members. Since the organization views her as a role model, she can be seen to represent an image that Plan wants to be associated with. Moreover, this image is assumed to appeal to potential members and "mobilize power" and support. This can be understood as an expression of Plan's efforts to embrace the marketized approach to brand and create an image of the organization which will help "selling" it to potential members. Despite not being a corporation, Plan appears to encompass some features of it, as described in the literature.

In total, the results indicate that Plan shows some traces of a marketized logic, exemplified by its cooperation with private companies which signifies an acceptance of them as actors in

development, and the involvement of several celebrities which help validate, brand and “sell” the organization.

Constructions of Femininity and Masculinity

In analysing the material, asking the questions detailed in the methodology section, several themes emerged in the construction of femininity and masculinity in relation to development. These themes encompass girls as maternal and altruistic, girls as efficient and self-sacrificing, men as egoistic and irresponsible, and men as oppressors. Before continuing to the identification of traces of instrumentalist and rights-based reasoning, I will describe the themes and then discuss their significance in relation to the research question in the final part of the essay.

Girls as Maternal and Altruistic

The first theme concerns the portrayal of girls and women as maternal, altruistic and helpful, a rather pronounced description in the material. In the personal stories about the four girls, three of them have children and two of them express how they want to create a good life for them. For example, Yeama says: “I want a stable economy so that I can give my children a good education. I always want them close to me and give them the good life they deserve” (Plan F 2017). Likewise, Kevinne explains: “I want to have my own income and create a life for me and my child”, and she describes how she wants to be able to create a “better future” for her child (ibid). Yeama and Kevinne are presented as taking responsibility for their children, caring about them and wanting what is best for them. This suggests that they are perceived as maternal and that they pursue their role as mothers. Moreover, when they talk about their future, there is no mentioning of the fathers of the children and they appear as entirely absent.

This portrayal of women as maternal and responsible for their children can also be seen in the following of Plan’s statements: “Women spend the majority of their income on their family and their surrounding and therefore contribute to bringing entire communities out of poverty” (Plan E 2017). This is one of Plan’s examples of why development institutions should focus on girls and the argument reoccurs several times in the material.

Besides wanting to help their children, girls are also presented as wanting to help other girls. Three of the four girls whose stories are described, have been victims of violence, and they all want to help and inform others. For example, Yeama wants to become a lawyer, strengthen

children's rights and help stop sexual violence against girls in school. Beatrice wants to "(...) inform of the risks of genital mutilation and child marriage in my community" (Plan F 2017). Similarly, it is described how Kevinne "(...) passes on her skills (about risks with teenage pregnancy) to other girls" (ibid). Hence, helping others and being altruistic is constructed as a driving force for the girls. Another example of women's connection to altruism appears when it is described how Yeama and her child were "rescued by a woman who took her and her child to another part of the country where she lives now" (Plan F 2017).

Taken together, these descriptions sketch a picture of femininity as characterized by maternal instincts, caring, taking responsibility for, and wanting to help, others. Women and girls are not driven by egoism, but they seem motivated by altruism. Hence, their potential skills and knowledges are not only portrayed as benefitting themselves, but also their children and their community. This is also one of Plan's recurring mottos: "Girls' future is everyone's future" (Plan E 2017). Increasing gender equality will not only benefit women and girls, but entire societies.

Girls as Efficient and Self-sacrificing

The second, and clearly related, theme concerns girls and women as active and efficient. Rather than describing girls solely as victims of patriarchal forces, they are referred to as hard-working, resistant and self-sacrificing. One example where this is seen, is in the story about thirteen-year-old Timotea from Guatemala who has to walk one hour in order to get to school. According to the story, her family has a hard time raising money to pay for her education, so she helps her mother with the duties at home, and at school breaks she follows her aunt to the capital to search for jobs. Due to this, it is difficult for Timotea to meet up her classmates after school. However, she is described as eager to continue her education after she graduates from elementary school (Plan F 2017).

Seventeen-year-old Yeama has a different background than Timotea. Yeama was kicked out of her home when she was twelve after her father remarried a woman who disliked her. Since she had no money she became a prostitute in order to pay for her education. It is described how she walked the streets at night and went to school during the days. With help from a woman and Plan International, Yeama managed to "take control of her life" and now wants to get an education and become a lawyer (Plan F 2017).

The texts about Timotea and Yeama ascribe them signs such as hard-working, self-sacrificing, eager and efficient. Both girls have in different ways had to work very hard and sacrifice a lot

in order to stay in school, but they are also described as eager to continue. This can be interpreted as an illustration of the efficiency attributed to women and girls in relation to development. They are not only portrayed as passive victims who expect others to do the work, but they work hard and “take control”. This constructs them as agents of development who through their sacrifice and hard work drive development forward. This suggests an image of girls that correlates with Plan’s description of girls as a “force for change” who, with the right preconditions, can “break the spiral of poverty” (Plan E 2017).

Nevertheless, another line of reason within the material perceives girls as a particularly exposed group with specific needs and challenges. For instance, Plan writes that “Girls are doubly discriminated, because they are children, but also because they are girls” and that “They (girls) are the most discriminated and exposed group” (Plan E 2017). Moreover, Plan wants to bring attention to “girls’ particular situation and needs” and their “‘invisibility’ on the agenda of international development” (Plan E 2017). Hence, the analysis implies an ambivalence in its portrayal of girls as on the one hand agents and on the other hand victims.

Men as Self-centred and Irresponsible

Men are not the explicit subject of Plan’s campaign and especially boys are glaringly absent. However, ideas of masculinity are very much present, in particular in their opposition to the construction of femininity. The first theme discerned about masculinity in relation to development concerns men as self-centred and irresponsible.

As mentioned, Plan argues that women spend the majority of their income on their families and their communities (Plan E 2017). While men are not explicitly mentioned one can interpret them as the constitutive outside of women. In other words, it is reasonable to assume that the consequence of the statement that women spend their income on their families is that men spend *less* money on their families. By portraying women as altruistic (partly because of their tendency to spend their money on others than themselves), men appear as self-centred and it is possible to assume that the money men do not spend on their families, they spend on themselves. Hence, ideas of masculinity are constructed in their relation to ideas of femininity.

When they appear explicitly in the text, as they do in the personal stories of the four girls, the perception of men as self-centred is illustrated. For example, Yeama was forced out of her home when she was only twelve years old. This because her mother died and her father remarried a woman who disliked Yeama (Plan F 2017). Here, the father can be interpreted as

an irresponsible parent since he kicks out his daughter and refuses to take care of her. His lack of parental responsibility appears in opposition to both Yeama's mother who died, and to Yeama's own parenthood. Firstly, since Yeama could stay at home while her mother was alive, it appears as if her mother took responsibility for her. But when the mother died, Yeama's father kicked her out. Thus, the mother constitutes the responsible, "good" parent and the father the irresponsible and "bad" parent. Secondly, Yeama describes her desire to have her own children near her and give them a decent education and a good future (ibid). This portrays her as a responsible and good mother, and constitutes yet another opposition to the father's egoism and lack of fatherly responsibility. In extension, femininity is once again connected to maternal responsibility while masculinity is associated to signs such as egoism and irresponsibility.

Another example of the construction of men as irresponsible, egoistic and "bad" parents can be found in Beatrice's story. She explains that when she got pregnant with her boyfriend her family forced them to marry. After the wedding, the boyfriend abandoned Beatrice and left her to raise their baby alone (Plan F 2017).

Nevertheless, there is one example that differs from the others. It is the story of Timotea whose father works as a farmer. Both Timotea's parents approve her education and work hard to afford paying for it (Plan F 2017). In this example, both the mother *and* the father appears as hard-working and responsible, and the father can be associated with responsibility and altruism.

Men as Oppressors?

Apart from the interpretation of masculinity as related to egoism and irresponsibility, masculinity can also be connected to violence, sexual abuse, force and tradition. For example, when Kevinne was sixteen years old she was forced against her will to marry a twenty-five-year-old man who already had three wives. The text describes how "She tried to be strong, but when she did not obey her husband he became violent" (Plan F 2017). He became angry with Kevinne and beat her so that she eventually had to flee. In the case of Yeama from Sierra Leone, she was sexually abused by her male teacher who gave her good grades in exchange for sex. She explains that "It is completely pronounced that bribes or sex is used to get good grades", and the abuse from her teacher continued for a year (ibid). For Beatrice, her family forced her to genital mutilation when she was thirteen, and when she tried to escape her

brother found her and forced her back to their home. She explains that after the circumcision, “Many men came to our home to propose, but I did not want to get married (...)” (ibid).

These examples, in which men constitute violent husbands, abusive teachers etc., masculinity can be connected to violence, sexual abuse, force and tradition. Men seem to be the reason for many of the difficulties that Kevinne, Yeama and Beatrice face. The singular more positive image of masculinity can be found in the description of, previously mentioned, father of Timotea, who is portrayed as a hard-working and helpful family man. Nevertheless, it is almost exclusively men who do bad things and for the three girls, men can be interpreted as the obstacles of their development. In other sections of the material men are never explicitly mentioned and the oppression against girls and women is referred to as “conservative forces and patriarchal norms”, “forces that want to reintroduce conservative family values”, “norms” and “social, cultural and religious traditions” (Plan E 2017). In other words, the oppression is not explicitly personified but described as a diffuse force and detrimental structures. Yet, given the general portrayals of masculinity (as violent, abusive obstacles for girls and women) these structures somehow appear as masculinized and upheld by men.

However, there are some exceptions to this, where also women are mentioned as oppressors. For example, it was Kevinne’s both parents who decided to marry her to a nine-year older man who already had three wives, and it was Beatrice’s family who forced her to get circumcised. Beatrice explains: “My family decided to take the hard line in order to get me circumcised. So they did it in a very brutal way.” (Plan F 2017). As mentioned above, Plan also writes that “conservative family values (...) (will have) direct consequences for girls’ future.” (ibid). These examples connect families to the oppression against women and girls, since families are portrayed as the practitioners of harmful traditions. Rather than men in general, this could indicate that Plan perceives certain traditions and customs as the primary threat against women.

[Instrumentalist and Rights-based Arguments](#)

As already indicated above, the results show several traces of instrumentalist arguments on why development objectives should focus on women and girls. One of the recurring slogans in Plan’s campaign on the International Day of the Girl Child is that “Girls’ future is everyone’s future” and this is used as an argument for the focus on girls. It is said that “everyone gains on gender equality”, and “for a country’s development it is crucial that both girls and boys have the same opportunities to educate and shape their own lives” (Plan E

2017). Supposedly, an educated girl has a greater opportunity to make her own life choices. “She often marries later and therefore, gives birth to fewer and healthier children.” For every additional year in school, girls’ future incomes increase. “Besides, women spend the majority part of their income on their family and their surroundings and therefore contribute to the entire national economy” (ibid).

Another recurring motto is that “girls are a force for change”, something that is assumed to not only be beneficial for themselves, but “(...) for their families, their societies and for entire countries” (Plan E 2017). Gender equality is fundamental to reduce poverty, suffering and create an equal world, and it is said that gender equality “(...) is not only girls’ right, it is crucial for breaking the spiral of poverty.” Another example of instrumentalist reasoning for gender equality is found in a section where Plan urges “us” to act now for girls’ rights. The following is being said: “We need to act now. For the sake of girls. And for ours. Because girls’ future is everyone’s future.” (Plan F 2017).

Besides instrumentalist reasoning, emphasis is put on gender equality as a social right and the results thus show traces of rights-based arguments. For example, it is written that Plan wants to “(...) mobilize for girls’ right to choose their own future” and that the organization wants to “(...) support girls’ equal position in society” (Plan E 2017). Plan wants to “bring awareness to the struggle for girls’ rights” and help “making girls and their rights more visible”. Plan’s perception of rights entails the right to go to school and receive an education, the right to “be a child” and not having to marry and give birth at a young age, the right to their own bodies, and the right to be free from violence and abuse (ibid; Plan G 2017).

Marketization and Instrumentalism

Part of the aim of this study is to examine traces of marketized logics in the organization Plan. This is done because of scholars such as Hickel, Roberts and Schwittay’s, claim that the increasing focus on instrumentalist arguments for gender equality in development can be connected to the marketization of aid. It is argued that corporations constitute new actors in the development arena, promoting gender equality as a way to produce more workers and consumers, and making capitalism part of the solution to poverty (Hickel 2014; Roberts 2015; Schwittay 2011). As accounted for above, the analysis demonstrates that Plan shows traces of marketization in terms of cooperation with private companies, which can be interpreted as a legitimization of them as actors in development, and involvement of celebrities as a way of branding and selling the organization. As I will explain below, the study also shows that Plan

frequently uses instrumentalist arguments for gender equality, and it thus confirms a linkage between the marketized logic and the increasing appeal to instrumentalist arguments. Nevertheless, more research has to be done in order to better understand how the marketization of aid and the instrumentalist approach are linked.

The Instrumentalist Approach or “Girls’ Future is Everyone’s Future”

As we have seen above, this discourse analysis shows that femininity is associated to signs such as altruism, maternity, responsibility, self-sacrifice and efficiency. In contrast, masculinity can be connected to egoism, irresponsibility and oppression, and the analysis indicates that ideas of men and women are created through opposition and difference. The constructions of femininity and masculinity suggest that women constitute the agents of development and men the obstacles. By portraying women and girls as responsible, altruistic and efficient they become active in development, and the ones who drive development forward. Through their altruism and efficiency their actions not only benefit themselves, but also their families and communities, thus, improving situations for many. Accordingly, it is implied that men constitute obstacles of development rather than agents. Because of their irresponsibility and egoism, they are not expected to spread wealth to others in the same way as women. Rather, men can be connected to the oppressive forces which prevent development.

The idea that women are the agents of development resonates well with the instrumentalist approach to gender equality. As the analysis shows, although gender equality is perceived to be a social right for women and girls, a significant focus is put on gender equality as an instrument for increasing development. The personal stories of Kevinne, Yeama, Beatrice and Timotea can be said to confirm this image. They all express a desire to use their knowledges and skills to help their communities and other girls, and can therefore be interpreted as examples of how girls’ empowerment also gains others. Hence, the instrumentalist approach is rather present in the material, both through direct statements and through the portrayal of femininity and masculinity.

What is at stake?

As previously described, various researchers discuss the instrumentalist argument’s tendency to appeal to traditional constructions of men and women. Roberts and Wilson argue that it is these particular constructions of men and women that constitute the very logic behind the instrumentalist approach. That is, it is women’s perceived qualities as responsible, efficient,

maternal etc., and men's characteristics as irresponsible and self-centred that makes women better suited instruments for development than men. In other words, it is the constructions of traditional gender roles that make investments in women more efficient than investments in men (Roberts 2015; Wilson 2011). This image can be confirmed in Plan's campaign on the International Day of the Girl Child since it suggests that Plan appeals to the constructions of traditional gender roles in order to advocate the instrumentalist approach to gender equality in development. Women and girls are portrayed as the agents of development who have the capacity to improve situations in entire countries, implicitly because of their characteristics as girls.

So, in order to address the fourth subquery of the study, why can this approach and this way of reasoning be problematic? Certainly, many feminists would agree that an increased focus on gender equality and girls' rights in the development discourse is a positive progression. Nevertheless, as stressed in the theory section, many argue that the instrumentalist approach tends to essentialize women and men, and advocating women's and girls' empowerment as instruments to make development more efficient therefore risks reinforcing unequal gender structures. As Wilson (2011) write, women's responsibility, efficiency and self-sacrifice are not expressions of their agency and "free choice", rather they are products of unequal gender structures which require different things from women and men. For example, women are responsible and spend their income on their family, not because it is natural for them, but because the gendered structures expect them to be the sole carers of children. Likewise, women's greater efficiency in relation to men is not an inborn quality, it is a consequence of the gendered division of labour which assumes women to do the unpaid work in the home and which makes them do more in less time. Hence, advocating gender equality by appealing to these "female" characteristics as instruments to make development more efficient risks maintaining the unequal structures which expect women to be the carers of children and doing the unpaid domestic work. It risks continuing demanding more from women than from men (Wilson 2011). Consequently, the liberating force behind the instrumentalist approach can be problematized.

Moreover, as Calkin (2015) and Hickel (2014) argue, the instrumentalist approach puts the burden of ending poverty on women, expecting them to be the drivers behind development. According to Hickel, this is not only unjust, it also ignores the complex root causes behind poverty in the Global South, including interference from the US and Europe (Hickel 2014). As described, the material suggests images of girls in the Global South as agents of

development. However, the emphasis on instrumentalist arguments can risk placing the responsibility of development on women, even if this is not the aim. For example, an argument used in Plan's campaign, described in the results, is that educated girls normally marry and give birth later in life, and that they often get fewer and *healthier* children (Plan C 2017, emphasis added). The argument entails that the mother's level of education has an effect on her children's health, where a higher education leads to healthier babies and a lower education to unhealthier babies. Drawing upon Hickel, this insinuates that the responsibility for healthy babies lies on women and that the value of women's and girls' education lies in its possibilities to increase other's well-being. Of course, education is vital for development and certainly educating girls should be a development objective. Nevertheless, this type of argument, which is illustrative for the instrumentalist approach in general, risks putting the responsibility for development on women and reducing them and their bodies to instruments without values in and of themselves.

Concluding reflections

In this study, I set out to answer if, and in that case how, the current development discourse, centring on instrumentalist arguments for gender equality and the "marketization" of aid, is reflected in Plan International Sweden's campaign on the International Day of the Girl Child. The method used is discourse analysis which sees social meaning as constructed through oppositions. The study draws upon critical feminist theories which argue that the instrumentalist approach, which scholars mean has become more common due to the marketization of aid, essentializes women and men in line with traditional ideas of femininity and masculinity. Based on the theories, I have searched for constructions of women and men in relation to development, as they appear in opposition to each other. The results show that the discourse of Plan's campaign appeals to traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity where women and girls are ascribed signs such as maternal, responsible, altruistic and efficient, and men self-centred, irresponsible and potentially oppressive. This suggests that women are the agents of development and men the obstacles. Relatedly, Plan shows clear traces of instrumentalist reasoning, both explicitly and implicitly, arguing that gender equality, besides being a social right, is an instrument to increase development efficiency. Additionally, I find that Plan shows traces of a marketized logic, something that can be seen in the organization's cooperation with private companies which signifies an acceptance of

them as actors in development, and the involvement of several celebrities which help validate, brand and “sell” the organization. This study thereby indicates a linkage between an increasing marketization and instrumentalist reasoning.

Nevertheless, due to this study’s limited scope, more research is needed in order to further examine the connections between marketization and instrumentalism. For example, future research should make a comparative analysis with a less marketized NGO in order to examine their use of instrumentalist arguments. Future research should also focus on the postcolonial aspect of the current development discourse in NGO’s and examine how constructions of women and girls in the Global South are created in relation to the Global North. For example, what consequences do the images that Swedish NGO’s present of girls in developing countries have in relation to processes of othering, and what role does celebrities play in creating constructions of “Us” and “Them”?

Lastly, I encourage future research to further examine potential risks and consequences of the instrumentalist approach. I have touched upon this in my study, reflecting on the liberating potentials behind the instrumentalist approach discussing that it risks reinforcing unequal gender structures where women are required to be the sole carers of children and do the majority of unpaid domestic labour. I have also discussed that it risks putting the responsibility of development on women and girls, and constructing them as instruments rather than human beings. Related to this, I reflect on Plan’s motto that girls’ future is everyone’s future and I cannot help but wonder if it is not enough that girls’ future is *girls’* future.

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