

# With Faith in Development: Islamic Charity as Development in Practice?

Perspectives from Pakistan and the Pakistani Diaspora

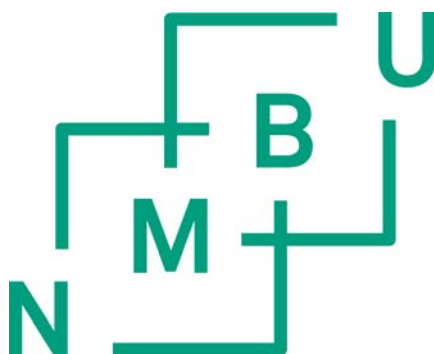
Utviklingsengasjement og religiøs praksis blant muslimer i Pakistan og  
den pakistanske diasporaen

Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) Thesis

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Ås/2017



Thesis number 2017:41  
ISSN 1894-6402  
ISBN 978-82-575-1392-4



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## Summary of the thesis

This thesis explores ideals and practices of Islamic charity and how these relate to notions of development and development aid (RQ1) in Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora. The study includes a focus on gender (RQ2) and transnational dimensions (RQ3). ‘Islamic charity’ is understood in a broad sense to describe normative ideals and Muslim religious practices intended to help people in need and to contribute to development.

Taking an actor-orientated approach, the study is not driven by theological analysis or by preconceived notions of what constitutes development. Rather, it examines how actors, as individuals and as organizational members, give meaning to what they do by reflecting on their religious practices, social activism and development engagements. The thesis draws on data produced through multi-sited, qualitative fieldwork conducted in Pakistani Punjab, Oslo, and London during the period 2012 to 2015. It incorporates 92 semi-structured interviews, as well as informal interviews, observation, and written material.

Four articles form a major part of the thesis. The first article questions how ideals and practices of Islamic charity intersect with and motivate the ways migrants engage in development. It examines how migrants’ everyday practices of Islamic charity relate to their development engagements in their country of origin and beyond. Article 2 explores the role of religion in the migration–development nexus by investigating how Islamic charity is organized transnationally. As opposed to studies focusing on faith-based organizations, the article unpacks what it means for something to be ‘faith-based’ and explores the different roles religion can take in both formal and informal modes of organizing. The intersection of religion, gender, and development is explicated in Article 3. Studying women activists in two religio-political aid organizations in Pakistan, it examines how religion influences the women’s ideas and practices of development, and how the practices are gendered. The fourth article focuses on the ‘NGOization’ of Islamic charity in Pakistan. Attention is devoted to the normative dimension of organizational legitimacy by examining how actors make claims to legitimacy as providers of aid in changing institutional environments.

Researching Islamic charity and development in multiple contexts sheds light on how religion influences conceptions of development and the ways people engage. The analysis reveals how actors relate to, and draw on, ideals and practices from the Islamic tradition, as well as from mainstream aid and development discourses. It finds significant gendered variations in how Islamic charity is organized in Pakistan and the diaspora, and that women play noteworthy roles as development actors in both contexts. It brings out how motivations for engaging in Islamic charity and development work combine worldly and transcendental dimensions. In relation to actors in the diaspora, this research points to the ways in which religious duties can overlap with familial and other social obligations, but can also intersect with what elsewhere is termed diaspora development.

The study reveals how religion influences conceptions and practices of development, and that religion can be both explicit and implicit in different contexts. Moreover, including religion in analysis allows for a broader and more nuanced understanding of actors in development, and of what development is conceived to be by these different actors. This thesis concludes that many aspects of Islamic charity, and particularly where it has focused on activities to support longer-term social change, reflect a unique type of development in practice. This development practice is deeply embedded in cultural and religious norms and values, but is nevertheless influenced by globalized understandings of social, political, and economic development.

## Sammendrag av oppgaven

Denne avhandlingen utforsker idealer og praksiser knyttet til veldedighet blant muslimer (Islamic charity) og hvordan disse kan knyttes til ideer om utvikling og bistand i Pakistan og den pakistanske diasporaen. Studien fokuserer også på kjønn og transnasjonale dimensjoner. Begrepet 'Islamic charity' er brukt i vid forstand til å beskrive normative idealer og religiøse praksiser blant muslimer som har til hensikt å hjelpe mennesker i nød og bidra til utvikling.

Studien er aktørorientert, snarere enn å være drevet av teologisk analyse eller forhåndsdefinerte ideer om hva utvikling er. Den utforsker hvordan aktører, som individer og som medlemmer av organisasjoner, gir mening til det de gjør gjennom refleksjoner rundt sin egen religiøse praksis, sosiale engasjement og utviklingsrelaterte arbeid. Oppgaven benytter data innsamlet gjennom kvalitativt feltarbeid i pakistanske Punjab, Oslo og London i perioden 2012 til 2015. Det omfatter 92 semi-strukturerte intervjuer, samt uformelle intervjuer, observasjon og skriftlig materiale.

Fire artikler danner hoveddelen av avhandlingen. Den første artikkelen undersøker hvordan idealer og praksiser knyttet til veldedighet i Islam relaterer til og motiverer måter migranter engasjerer seg i bistand og utvikling på. Artikkelen utforsker hvordan migranternes hverdagspraksiser knyttet til veldedighet kan knyttes til deres engasjement for utvikling i opprinnelsesland, så vel som andre steder. Artikkel 2 utforsker religionens rolle i krysningpunktet mellom migrasjon og utvikling gjennom å undersøke hvordan veldedighet blant muslimer er organisert transnasjonalt. Artikkelen utforsker hva det betyr at noe er trosbasert, og analyserer religionens ulike roller i formelle og uformelle organisasjonsformer. Artikkel 3 utforsker forholdet mellom religion, kjønn og utvikling. Med utgangspunkt i kvinnelige aktivister i to politisk-religiøse organisasjoner i Pakistan undersøkes kvinnenes ideer og praksiser relatert til utvikling, og hvordan disse kan knyttes til kjønn, religion og sosioøkonomisk stilling. Artikkel 4 konsentrerer seg om «NGO-isering» av muslimers veldedighet i Pakistan. Artikkelen tar for seg normative dimensjoner av organisatorisk legitimitet ved å analysere hvordan politisk-religiøse aktører gjør krav på legitimitet som bistandsleverandører når de institusjonelle omgivelsene endres.

Ved å forske på muslimers veldedighet og utviklingsengasjement i flere ulike kontekster, kaster oppgaven som helhet lys på hvordan religion påvirker forestillinger om utvikling så vel som måten folk engasjerer seg på. Analysen viser hvordan aktører på ulike måter relaterer til og anvender idealer og praksiser både fra islamsk tradisjon og fra mainstream bistands- og utviklingsdiskurs og praksis. Studien finner signifikante kjønnede variasjoner i hvordan islamsk veldedighet er organisert i Pakistan og i diasporaen. Den finner også at kvinner spiller viktige roller som utviklingsaktører i begge kontekster. Analysen viser videre at motivasjonen for å engasjere seg i veldedighets- og bistandsarbeid har både verdslige og religiøse dimensjoner. Med hensyn til aktører i diasporaen indikerer denne studien at religiøse forpliktelser kan overlappes med familiære og andre sosiale forpliktelser, men at de også kan overlappes med det som ofte omtales som diaspora-basert utviklingsengasjement.

Studien viser hvordan religion påvirker forestillinger og praksiser relatert til utvikling, og at religion kan ta både implisitte og eksplisitte roller i ulike kontekster. Inkluderingen av religion i analysen muliggjør en bredere og mer nyansert forståelse av hvem som er utviklingsaktører, samt av hvilken forståelse de ulike aktørene har av utvikling. Denne avhandlingen konkluderer med at mange aspekter ved 'islamsk veldedighet', spesielt den som dreier seg om langsiktig samfunnsendring, representerer en unik type utvikling i praksis. Dette er utviklingspraksiser som er dypt integrert i kulturelle og religiøse normer og verdier, men som likevel påvirkes av globaliserte forståelser av sosial, politisk og økonomisk utvikling.

## Acknowledgments

At the end of this doctoral journey there are many people to whom I owe thanks. First of all, I thank the research participants, the women and men in Oslo, London and Punjab, who agreed to be part of his project, who welcomed me as a guest and shared with me their insights and reflections. This project would not have been possible without the trust you have bestowed upon me. You have been truly inspirational.

While the final product is my responsibility alone, this project would not have been possible without the guidance, inspiration, and assistance of many wonderful colleagues, friends and family. My two brilliant supervisors, Ingrid Nyborg and Kristian Berg Harpviken, have been great sources of inspiration, guidance and constructive criticism. Thank you Ingrid, for always showing such clear-sightedness, enthusiasm and good humour, even when I had lost mine. Thank you Kristian, for sharing your sharp, analytical mind and incredible creativity, and for always being so positive and solution-orientated. I truly appreciate the confidence you both showed in me.

A big thank you also goes to my dear friends, colleague and unofficial supervisor, Marta Bivand Erdal. Thank you for sharing, endlessly, of your experience, ideas and optimism. You are truly inspirational, and lots of fun! I am looking forward to more creative sessions in local coffee shops.

Thank you to the Norwegian Research Council and PRIO for funding this project. Thank you to the Norwegian University of Life Sciences and Noragric for providing me with the opportunity to do this PhD at Ås. Thank you to Josie Teurlings for practical help and encouragement. Thank you to my PhD colleagues for peer review and good exchanges about PhD life. Thank you to all at PRIO who have made this PhD journey a rewarding, stimulating, and manageable experience. You are too many to mention and I would be too afraid of leaving anyone out, although a special thanks will go to Cathrine Bye for always being there for all the small and big things.

I would also like to thank the project advisory board, Masooda Bano, Jonathan Benthall, Christopher Candland, Hafeez ur Rehman, Khalid ur Rahman, and Shoaib Sultan for stimulating discussions and advice at two important junctures in this project. Thank you also goes to the many colleagues who have offered constructive criticism at various stages of the thesis: Arne Strand, Bill Derman, Esben Leifsen, Kjersti Larsen, Randi Kaarhus and Øyvind Eggen. Thank you to Ana Roman and Anam Amjad for research assistance, and to Ruth Coetzee, Karina Hof and Georgina Berry for language editing of various parts of the thesis.

Thank you to all the people who have made me know Pakistan the way I do. Thank you to the wonderful people at Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi who gave me insights into real life in Pakistan all those years ago, to my excellent colleagues from the years at UNDP Pakistan, and especially to Fayyaz Baqir for guidance and inspiration. Thank you to the Afzals, my Pakistani family, for opening your home and taking care of me, now as then, for letting me know Lahore the Lahoree way. Thank you Muhammad Razzaq, for guidance and contacts. Thank you Ali, for waiting casually outside Arrivals, for making Lahore manageable and fun, and for bringing the Bollywood canon. Thank you Zainab Qazilbash and Asif Hayat, for opening your homes and making me feel at home in Islamabad.

Thank you Gina Lende and Frida Austvoll Nome, for being part of this journey, with all the ups and downs; you are the very best of travel companions! I don't know if I would have come this far without you. I know for sure it would have been much less fun without you. I look forward to our future journeys.

They say it takes a village to make a PhD. Thanks go to my village people at St. Hanshaugen, for stepping in to make the everyday logistics go round. Thank you to all my wonderful friends who have given life some normalcy, even in times of 'crisis'. It has been needed and highly valued.

I also own my family a big thank you. To my mother Liv Borchgrevink, for teaching me by example that nothing is impossible. You are the best mother and grandmother. Thank you for giving endlessly of your love, support and time. To my father, Per Andersen, for teaching me to think independently and creatively, for being so firm and rational, yet so nonjudgmental and good humored. Thank you both for showing me the world, and letting me find my way in it. You have given me the best foundation for embarking on this project. Anders, Anne, Siri and the rest of the family – thank you for stepping in when needed, for the support, and not the least, for all the good times!

Thank you, Alexander, for your constant and unconditional support and encouragement. This has been a longer and more challenging journey than I think either of us ever imagined. Thank you for giving me time, love, and happiness every day. Thank you for reminding me to talk to Kristian, for pushing me to do yoga, for trusting my judgement about going to Pakistan, for making coffee in the mornings, for knowing what is good for me.

Thank you Clara and Georg for just being there, for being lovely, funny, noisy, and demanding. Thank you for waking me up every morning, for taking my focus away from the thesis, and the work that should have been done. You have put things in perspective by constantly reminding me about what actually matters. Thank you for introducing me to the secrets of Pokemon and 'Pinkipaipony'; for demanding that I know what is important in your lives. Alexander, Georg and Clara, you are the sunshine of my life. You make all the difference.



# **Part 1 – Foundation**

## Foundation

## 1. Introduction

This thesis explores Islamic charity, the nature of its ideals and practices, and how these relate to notions of development and development aid.<sup>1</sup> I examine the organization of Islamic charity in relation to development engagements among particular groups of Sunni Muslims in Punjab (Pakistan), together with the Pakistani diaspora<sup>2</sup> in Oslo (Norway) and London (United Kingdom [UK]). The study includes a focus on gender as well as on transnational dimensions, where these have emerged as significant in the analysis of the empirical material.

This investigation into how Islamic charity, aid, and development are understood and practised is not a theological analysis. Rather, it is based on how actors – as individuals or as members of an organization or network – give meaning to what they do, by reflecting on their religious practice, social activism and development engagements.

It is my hope that, at the conclusion of this thesis, the reader will have answers, or will move closer to answers, to the following questions: How do Muslims as individuals and as part of collective efforts, work to aid the needy and contribute to development? How are their ideals and goals shaped by Islamic norms and institutions, and how are these translated into practice? What kind of development is envisaged, and how do Muslims propose to achieve these aims?

### 1.1. Islamic charity

This study uses ‘Islamic charity’ as a starting point. This is not an established analytical concept, but is rather a descriptive category which I use to denote Islamic ideals and Muslim religious practice related to charity.<sup>3</sup> A number of concrete institutions of Islamic charity are detailed in the Quran and the Sunnah.<sup>4</sup> *Zakat*, a religious tax, is the third pillar of Islam, in the company of commitment to faith, fasting, prayer, and pilgrimage. This signifies the centrality of charity in Islamic doctrine and the religious practice of Muslims. While interpretation and practice vary, a common core unites them as ‘Islamic’ and part of the

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<sup>1</sup> The concepts of development and development aid are defined and discussed in section 3.2.

<sup>2</sup> I use ‘diaspora’ to describe communities of migrants from Pakistan and their children. While the concept of diaspora is fuzzy and debated (Brubaker, 2005), the term is common in the literature on ‘diaspora and development’ (De Haas, 2010; Van Hear, Pieke & Vertovec, 2004) and ‘diaspora and transnationalism’ (Bauböck & Faist, 2010). It has been pointed out that the old ‘diaspora’ is the new ‘transnational communities’ (Vertovec, 2009). Any further diaspora discussions would be outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> To translate terms from one cultural ambit to another is a challenge. The English word ‘charity’, from the Latin word ‘caritas’ meaning ‘love for God and humanity’ has its origin in the Christian tradition. (Merriam-Webster, 2017a). It does not express the same meaning as the Arabic terms used in the Quran to denote the various forms of charity in the Islamic tradition.

<sup>4</sup> The Quran is the Islamic book of revelation and the Sunnah is the prophetic tradition (Esposito, 2003).

‘Islamic tradition’ (Asad, 1986; Mandaville, 2001; Juul Petersen, 2016). To avoid essentializing interpretations of Islam however, I focus on Muslims’ own ideals and practices. I thus use ‘Islamic charity’ as a term to broadly describe religiously framed normative ideals and practices which aim at helping the needy – monetarily or through voluntary or paid work – and to contribute to societal development. I am not primarily concerned with the theologies of Islam, but rather with understanding how people interpret and make sense of Islam *in their everyday life*, drawing on religious texts from the Quran and the Sunnah, teachings from religious teachers and TV imams, and discussions in Quran study groups with friends and family, as well as in online discussion forums. Moreover, I am concerned with how these ideals are expressed through Islamic charity such as almsgiving, volunteering, and doing good deeds – all social practices to which my informants ascribe religious significance – and how organizations that are funded by religious alms give meaning to their practices.

As this thesis reveals, Islamic charity takes many forms, is organized formally and informally, and involves interactions on local and transnational scales. It is estimated that globally Muslims give between USD 200 billion and 1 trillion in charity annually (IRIN, 2012). Taking even the lowest estimate, this is 15 times the total of global humanitarian aid combined.<sup>5</sup> Yet, private Islamic charity, individually or collectively given, is not counted as part of the official statistics of humanitarian assistance (Lacey & Benthall, 2014). This thesis focuses on private Islamic charity, in spite of the difficulty of obtaining official data owing to its private and discretionary nature.<sup>6</sup>

Islamic charity has a strong visual presence worldwide, particularly in countries with large Muslim populations. In Pakistan, a majority Muslim society, myriad religious organizations post their signs along roadsides, and collection boxes are to be found everywhere. In the weeks before Eid ul-Adha, when *qurbani* (the annual animal sacrifice) is

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<sup>5</sup> Estimates are difficult to obtain, though these figures gives us a rough indication of the massive volume of Islamic charity that is distributed globally. Islamic states give considerable amount as foreign aid (for estimates, see Tittensor & Clarke, 2014), though this falls outside the scope of my study. It is noteworthy, however, that the antagonism towards and scrutiny of Islamic charities for suspicions of financing terrorism, particularly post-9/11, have made Muslim aid organizations and donors establish their own aid coordination system. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which set up its own humanitarian affairs committee in 2008 (ibid.), exists parallel to that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistant Committee (DAC) and the UN’s Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

<sup>6</sup> A 2010 survey from Punjab, Pakistan, indicates that the desire to practice Islamic charity is an important motivation for individuals to give; out of PKR 46.9 billion given as private charity, PKR 17.7 billion (38%) was given as zakat. The survey showed a preference for giving directly to individuals (63%) over organizations (37%), particularly in the case of zakat, whereby 67% was given directly to individuals (Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy, 2010).

performed, the streets are filled with goats, cows, and sheep waiting to be bought and slaughtered. The sale of qurbani hides, donated by individuals after the ritual sacrifice, is a major source of income for many charity, welfare, and aid organizations. Islamic charity follows the Islamic calendar; it is expressed in very concrete and material ways, influencing people's everyday lives, individuals' commitment to help the less fortunate, and the work of charity, welfare, and aid organizations. In the Muslim community in Oslo, Islamic charity is most conspicuous where the city's main mosques are located, and during Ramadan and Eid, when many Muslim non-governmental organizations (NGOs)<sup>7</sup> appeal for donations and advertise 'qurbani services',<sup>8</sup> some of which are offered in Pakistan.

The main inspiration for this thesis derives from an observation I made when working at an international development organization in Pakistan in the early 2000s. I noticed that despite the deep-seated commitment of most Muslims to aid the poor and the needy – religious actors and organizations were not considered part of the aid and development sector. The organization I worked for collaborated with religious actors expressly to get their support for, or non-objection to projects in what were considered to be conservative areas, where having the religious leader involved could help project implementation. Religious actors and organizations were not generally considered to be 'development actors'. This compelled me to ask: is there a separate Islamic charity sector working parallel to the mainstream development sector? I wondered if these sectors would relate, overlap or fundamentally differ and keep separate? Or were there collaborations between them? How could an Islamic charity sector differ from the international aid sector that I had come to know? What would be the aims of these organizations? What would be their understandings of the change they want to effect and how might religion shape their discourses and practices of development? These queries inspired the study at hand; they are reflected – although in slightly different words – in the research questions that underpin this study. Now at the end of my doctoral journey, these questions seem no less pressing than 15 years ago, when I first posed them.

## **1.2. Research questions and aim of thesis**

The thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

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<sup>7</sup> In this thesis I adopt Gerard Clarke's definition (1998, p.36) of NGOs as 'private, non-profit, professional organizations with a distinctive legal character, concerned with public welfare goals'.

<sup>8</sup> Organizations offer to carry out qurbani on individuals' behalf. A fixed price for the service includes the cost of the animal, the completion of the ritual slaughter and distribution of the meat to the poor.

- RQ 1 How does Islamic charity – its ideals and practices – relate to conceptions and practices of development among actors in Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora?
- RQ 2 In what ways are ideals and practices of Islamic charity gendered?
- RQ 3 What is the role of Islamic charity in diaspora development engagements?

Exploring these overarching research questions, I acknowledge the diverse roles religion can play when people engage in development. I examine how everyday practices of Islamic charity intersect with engagement for development (article 1) and the role religion plays in organizing for development (articles 2, 3, and 4) in shaping the focus of activities (articles 1, 2, 3, and 4) and in organizational legitimacy (article 4). In my analysis, I stress gender dimensions (articles 2 and 3) and transnationalism (articles 1 and 2). The overarching research questions have inspired the specific questions addressed in the four articles included in this dissertation.

With this thesis, I hope to move beyond an instrumental understanding of religion in development. Rather than scrutinizing whether religion helps or hinders development, I focus instead on what *it means* that something (an action, an organization or anything else) is ‘faith-based’, on the different roles religion can take and the influence religion can have on conceptions of development and development practice. The thesis addresses these questions from a number of perspectives, focusing on both individual experiences and religious organizations, taking an actor-orientated approach (Long, 2001). Through this study, I question who is being considered a development actor. I argue that a focus on religious discourse and practice gives way to a broader and more nuanced understanding of actors in development – and to understandings of what they themselves conceive development to be. Alongside these aims, I hold a normative position: I seek to demonstrate the role that Islamic charity plays in development, thus contributing to empirically based knowledge production concerning those at the margins of international aid who often go uncounted as actors in development. This is not to essentialize ‘the Islamic’ or ‘Muslims’, but rather to shine a spotlight on actors who are often reduced to stereotypes. This research was conducted in an era of rising antagonism towards Muslims, where the charitable practices of Muslims are often associated with the financing of terrorism (Alterman & Von Hippel, 2007; Kaag, 2007) and who are more often the subject of studies on terrorism than on development (Lacey & Benthall, 2014; Juul Petersen, 2012).

Further, the huge volume of Islamic charity has potential significance for many people's lives. To assess its impact or effectiveness is outside this study's scope, though I believe it is essential to produce more empirically based knowledge about actors playing increasingly important roles locally as well as on international arenas. The search for such knowledge necessitates study of the diverse actors who are working to reduce poverty, to help the poor and needy, and to contribute to social change, both as individuals and members of organizations and networks.

Through empirical investigation, the aim of my study is to gain knowledge about a phenomenon that has generally received little academic attention. Beyond that, I hope to contribute to refine ways of conceptualizing the role religion can take on in development and the relationship between people's religious practice and development engagements.

### **1.3. Organization of the dissertations**

The thesis comprises two main parts: the foundation and four articles. The foundation is composed of eight sections, providing an introduction and frame of reference for the articles, in addition to discussing conclusions drawn from the articles. The first section introduces the overall aim, background and research questions guiding this study. The second situates my research within development studies and identifies the knowledge gaps I seek to fill. The third section elaborates on the central concepts of religion, development, and gender, while the fourth presents my methodological approaches, introducing actor-orientated and transnational perspectives. The context of the study is presented in the fifth section, and the sixth section outlines my research design and methods, in addition to sharing reflections on the research process. In the seventh section, I present summaries of the four articles which form part two of this thesis. The final section of the foundation offers conclusions and points to some areas for future research.

## **2. Situating a study of Islamic charity in development studies**

I situate my thesis within development studies and the emerging sub-field of religion in development. Exploring the relationship between Islamic charity and development from a number of vantage points, I draw on three intersecting literatures: religion and development, gender and development, and diaspora in development. Turning now to discuss the central themes of these fields, I offer some background to the study and identify the knowledge gaps that I intend to address.

### **2.1. Religion and development**

The last two decades have witnessed an extraordinary rise in the interest in the relationship between religion and development as evidenced in both development practice and scholarship (Swart & Nell, 2016).<sup>9</sup> The relationship between religion and development has been contested in development studies and, more generally, in the social sciences (Deneulin & Bano, 2009; Haynes, 2007). While religion was relevant for many early social theorists including Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, assumptions about secularization – that modernization would render religion less important in society and in individuals' minds – made religion a private matter, not a concern of the public sphere, civil society, or the state (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011). The belief in secularization as a 'universal, desirable and irreversible trend' dominated the social sciences (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011, p. 49). Strongly influenced by the modernization and secularization thesis, scholars disregarded religion as a relevant factor for development. Development was associated with modernity (rationality, science, and hard facts); religion was associated with tradition (irrationality, superstition, and beliefs). While development was defined as progress, religion was seen as its obstacle or simply considered irrelevant (Juul Petersen, 2011).

It is now widely accepted that the secularization thesis has failed, or is at least seriously flawed, and that religion remains of great importance for many people in all parts of the world (Berger, 1999; Casanova, 2011). Research has instead turned to the 'de-privatization'<sup>10</sup> of religion and to the study of religion in public life (Casanova, 2011), including its role in development.

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<sup>9</sup> Important contributions to what is by now, a bulging literature on religion in development have been made by the World Faith Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics (initiated in 2000), initiated by The World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the research programme on religion and development in the Department for International Development at the University of Birmingham (initiated in 2005).

<sup>10</sup> I put 'de-privatization' in inverted commas because, as rightly pointed out by other scholars in many contexts, including South Asia, religion was never privatized (Tomalin, 2015a).



This burgeoning interest has produced a number of significant review articles, most notably by Deneulin and Rakodi (2011), and by Jones and Juul Petersen (2011), as well as handbooks on religion and development (M. Clarke, 2013; Tomalin, 2015b). Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, pp. 46–48) identify three sets of circumstances that have piqued new interest in religion in development. First, religion is not becoming any less important in many people's lives, particularly in countries in the Global South. Second, the 'global religious resurgence' has made religion a political factor and thus relevant for studies of society in general. Third, following the introduction of neoliberal policies that reduce the role of the state, faith-based organizations (FBOs) have come to be recognized as fulfilling significant service delivery functions and are therefore seen as important partners in development.

The role which religion has been given in development studies and practice mirrors broader trends in development theory. Religion was generally seen as irrelevant, if not detrimental, to development in modernization theory and Marxist political economy, although it was given attention in postmodernist and post-constructivist development studies, where more anthropological approaches to understanding social relations in society were incorporated. The space for religion in development has shifted with the ways development is conceptualized. A pluralization of discourses of development since the 1990s has made room for religion in development studies and practice. Emergence of the human development paradigm notably brought about new understandings of development as multidimensional and contextual processes. This conceptual innovation opened the door to including immaterial dimensions into mainstream development conceptions of human wellbeing (Deneulin & Bano, 2009; Jones & Juul Petersen, 2011).

#### *Instrumental focus on religion in development research*

The growing interest in religion and development over the last decade is also witnessed in increased willingness among donors to fund FBOs.<sup>11</sup> This has been associated with the perception that organizations that are 'faith-based' are distinct from 'secular' organizations (Tomalin, 2012, pp. 690–691). The subject of FBOs has become a popular choice to study, particularly focusing on their role as partners in development (Bradley, 2009; G. Clarke, 2008; G. Clarke, 2013). Some scholars argue that faith-based actors may have a comparative advantage to secular organizations, for example by having cultural, or rather religious,

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<sup>11</sup> The origin of the term has been traced to the rise of Christian rightwing politics in the United States in the 2000s, a period in which FBOs became favoured partners in service delivery both domestically and as part of development aid (Tomalin, 2012, p. 692). The close association with Christianity and the West has made some organizations situated in other contexts wary of using the term (Tomalin, 2012).

proximity to recipient communities with the same faith (Benthall, 2008; De Cordier 2009a). Others find that there is little evidence to make any such claims on a general level, and argues that if such assessments are to be made at all they need to be thoroughly contextualized (Palmer, 2011; Tomalin, 2012). In the view of Tomalin, the shift of donors' focus to FBOs, and the associated interest in their comparative advantage, 'reflects their location within a global political discourse that have "found faith" (Tomalin, 2012, p. 701).

The research on FBOs has been criticized for viewing religion instrumentally, for focusing too narrowly on these organizations, and for being based on normative assumptions of religion as good or bad for development (Jones & Juul Petersen, 2011; Østebø & Østebø, 2014). Several of these studies are also critiqued for reflecting a view of religion as a predefined category, static and unchanging (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011). Attempting to move beyond these static and reifying understandings of religion, some scholars have instead endeavoured to understand what faith-based means. For example, recent studies of transnational Muslim NGOs are approaching these not as FBOs, but as any organization. These studies explore the ways in which religion has significance and how this shapes the development discourses and practices of these organizations (Juul Petersen, 2011).

Islamic charities and Muslim NGOs have attracted increased scholarly interest in recent years (De Cordier, 2009a; Ferris, 2005; Ghandour, 2003; Lacey & Benthall, 2014; Juul Petersen, 2016; Salehin, 2016). With a few notable exceptions, such as Salehin's (2016) examination of the complex landscape of Muslim NGOs in Bangladesh, these studies predominantly deal with those formal Muslim NGOs which are foreign to the countries in which they work. In research on development, little attention has been given to the role of religion in engagement for relief and development outside formally organized structures. There is also very little focus on religion in organizations that are not explicitly religious, such as diaspora organizations. With the aim of addressing some of these knowledge gaps, I include formal and informal actors (such as formally registered NGOs and informal women's groups) in my analysis, as well as actors who are not explicitly faith-based, and organizations with origins in the Global South.

Among critics of this new consideration of religion and religious actors, some scholars caution against hopping on the 'faith-based bandwagon', and point out the danger of blurring the lines between analysis and endorsement (De Kadt, 2009). How donors and other development actors approach religion, and who they choose to support, may have direct bearings on people's lives (Balchin, 2003). Although religion may contribute positively to development in terms of motivations, and a sensitivity to religion may provide more

culturally appropriate development interventions, there is also a need to critically assess the work of faith-based development organizations in order to prevent funding from going to organizations ‘whose objectives are to proselytize or/and denigrate other faiths’ (Bradley, 2009, p. 103). De Kadt warns in particular against actors with rigid understanding of religion, who aim to regulate cultural and social interactions (De Kadt, 2009). These are valid points, particularly with regard to donors’ engagement with religious actors as partners and recipients of aid.

This critique, however, can also be seen as indicative of the tendency to focus on the instrumental value of religion, which is also present in development research. I believe there is a need to widen the focus that currently falls narrowly on FBOs, and to enquire more robustly about the role of religion in development. This involves questioning what it means to be faith-based and how religion shapes conceptions of development and development practice also among actors situated outside the mainstream development field. This must be done without the aim of assessing the utility of these organizations as service providers or partners in development. I echo the call by Jones and Juul Petersen (2011, p.1303) for more research on the role of religion in development that is ‘less easily aligned with the interests of development agencies’, which might not be directly relevant to policy. Reviewing the treatment of religion in development studies over the last 30 years, Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 49) find that while religious organizations are recognized for their instrumental value in service delivery and as partners in development, religion as ‘shaping values and conceptions of development is rarely considered’. Motivated by this observation, this thesis explores how religion is shaping conceptions and practices of aid and development in particular contexts.

## **2.2. Gender and development**

Ever since a focus on women in development processes appeared in development studies, policy and practice in the 1970s, it has become almost obligatory to give attention to ‘women’ and later to ‘gender’ in development project or intervention (Bano, 2009; Østebø, 2015). Today, actors promoting gender equality, women’s rights, and women’s empowerment are not limited to feminist<sup>12</sup> activists; they include governments, international donors, and civil society organizations (Østebø, 2015). However, the meaning and manner of

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<sup>12</sup> Although one today can speak of feminisms in the plural, Ann Denis (2008) proposes feminist scholars share certain basic assumptions: women are legitimate subjects of study; they are socially constructed (as are men); and as a social category, they have been subject to subordination. Associated with subordination is the struggle against patriarchal domination, as well as the emancipatory potential of feminist scholarship and activism.

this attention to gender is contested, generating multiple and competing approaches to gender in development. Similar to the tendency to ignore religion in mainstream development discourse and practice, religion has been a neglected concern within the field of gender and development (Tomalin, 2007, 2013). In this section, I will first discuss the different approaches to women and gender in development, before turning attention to religion in gender and development. Finally I make reference to the knowledge gap that this thesis sets out to address.

### *Women, gender and development*

The combined influence of general trends in development theory (discussed above) and feminist theory and activism have produced a number of approaches to gender in development theory and practice.<sup>13</sup> The first trend that can be identified is the so-called ‘women in development’ (WID) strategy, strongly influenced by Ester Boserup’s (1970) pioneering work: *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (Rathgeber, 1990; Razavi & Miller, 1995). Boserup emphasizes the need to include women in development processes, both to ensure that women benefit (and are not negatively affected) by development processes, and also to aid the development process itself as women’s domestic and productive work was seen to contribute to economic growth (Moser, 1993; Pearson, 2000). Boserup’s seminal work inspired American liberal feminists to mobilize for greater attention to women in development, which gradually contributed to the inclusion of women in development planning, and to making women targets of development projects.

By the 1980s, the WID approach was largely considered unsuccessful. In her book *Gender Planning in Development* (1993), Moser distinguishes between women’s ‘practical’ gender needs (defined as relating to access to employment, education, health care and clean water) and ‘strategic’ gender needs, defined as the needs women identify because of their subordinate position in society. In broad terms, WID approaches aim to address women’s practical gender needs, and were increasingly criticized as being unable to address the structural inequalities which were impeding women in taking equal part in and having access to the benefits of development. As a response, the gender and development (GAD) trend emerged in the 1980s. Growing from socialist and Marxist feminist thought, GAD approaches endeavour to address strategic gender needs through attentional to structural

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<sup>13</sup> An in-depth discussion of the genealogy of approaches to gender in development theory is outside the scope of this thesis. Excellent overviews are found elsewhere; see for example Moser (2003), Peet and Hartwick (2009), Rathgeber (1990) and Razavi and Miller (1995).

inequality and unequal power relations. In contrast to WID approaches which focus almost exclusively on women, GAD focuses on the socially constructed relations between men and women, including attention not only to women but also to men.

Today, core issues on the gender and development agenda are related to social differences between men and women, and how gender bias affects women's participation in the economy, violence against women, or women's access to basic services (Tomalin, 2013, p. 150). While some actors are chiefly concerned with what can be described as GAD approaches, working to empower women, many are also engaged in projects targeting women in order to enhance their access to education, health, and employment, along the lines of the WID approach. Over the last decade 'gender' has become mainstreamed into donor-funded development projects, making some question whether it has lost some of its transformational potential (Pearson, 2000, p. 383). Others question whether GAD is relevant to contexts outside the West, or if it fails to account for the different ways in which religion and culture shape women's lives (Tomalin, 2013, p.153).

Feminists from the Global South in particular, have criticized feminist theories of gender for being universalistic in approach, for not being derived from women's own experiences, and for theoretical inference from one particular context – the West (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Departing from these universalist theories on gender, a new strand of gender theory developed, focusing on diversity. Feminist and postcolonial scholars from the Global South, notably Mohanty (2002), but also postmodern and post-structuralist feminist scholars from the Global North, including Haraway (1988), emphasized the importance of making gender analyses situated, contextual, and relational, as well as discovering differences not only between men and women, but also among men and among women. This, it was argued, required a conceptualization of gender that was not only concerned with it as a category of difference (Nyborg, 2002), but also with its relations to other bases of distinction and stratification (such as race or ethnicity, class, age, religion) and how their intersection shapes the ways in which people experience the world (Wharton, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

While WID strategies focus on increasing women's access to resources to improve women's subordinate position, GAD emphasizes the need to transform patriarchal gender relations as a means to women's empowerment (Tomalin, 2013, p. 153). On the whole, approaches to women/gender in development can be seen as reflecting dominant development paradigms and are thus typically both materialist and secularist (Tomalin,

2013, p. 151). Both WID and GAD can in general be seen as having given little attention to the ways region and culture impacts on the lives and positions of poor women.

### *Religion in gender and development*

The continued importance of religion in many people's lives, particularly in poor countries, however, has made some scholars turn attention to religion in the context of gender and development. Scholars have identified the constraints this may pose to feminist gender equality objectives, but also noting the opportunities existing for taking the significance of religion in many people's lives seriously, seeking to find ways of engaging with religion in the context of gender and development (Tomalin, 2013). The interest is reflected in three main perspectives, which can broadly be categorized as: (i) religion as obstacle, (ii) religion as transformation, and (iii) religion as category of analysis. The religion-as-obstacle perspective is largely found within the secular-liberal-feminist<sup>14</sup> scholarship dominant among adherents of both WID and GAD approaches. Religiously based gender norms are considered as an obstacle by many exponents of gender and development when seen to interfere with secular development goals promoted by mainstream development actors (Bano, 2009; Tomalin, 2015a). This is particularly the case when religious principles or practices – for instance related to the patriarchal structures found in some form within most religious traditions – contradict ideals of gender equality, women's rights, or women's empowerment, as understood in dominant gender and development discourse and practice (Østebø, 2015; Tomalin, 2015a).

Although many feminists uphold the importance of protecting gender equality objectives from the potential negative influence of religious traditions, not all feminists are secular. The religion-as-transformation perspective views religion as a means to women's rights and empowerment, being predominant among women working from within religious traditions. As noted by Tomalin (2013), it is within GAD approaches that the consideration of religion becomes most relevant. She argues that in some contexts, women can enhance their position within existing gender hierarchies by engaging with religion, and through this, can challenge and potentially transform the patriarchal structures that 'restrict their development and empowerment' (Tomalin, 2013, p. 154). Religious feminist traditions can be found in all the major religions. Numerous examples exist of feminists who, working

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<sup>14</sup> Women's activism takes many shapes, and pigeonholing them can be problematic. Some broad categories can be identified, including liberal secular feminists, religious feminist and women activists who explicitly take anti-feminists stands. Still, positions within these different groups are diverse.

from within religious traditions, interpret religious texts and principles so that they are compatible with gender equality and women's rights. For instance, some Muslim women practise what has come to be known as Islamic feminism<sup>15</sup>, in which religious texts and traditions are interpreted in ways that support gender equality. The growth of Islamic feminism in different parts of the world has provided opportunities for advocating for women's rights through the use of religious concepts and texts (Kirmani & Phillips, 2011, p. 87). The study of religious feminism opens for a more nuanced understanding of women's (and men's) diverse engagement with feminism. However, it tells us little about those women who consider themselves anti-feminists.

While the religion-as-obstacle and the religion-as-transformation perspectives both take a feminist position as a point of departure and operate within a feminist framework, the third perspective moves beyond an explicitly normative or prescriptive perspective and treats religion as a social category which (among other categories such as race or ethnicity, class, age, and gender) must be taken into account when analysing gender and development (Tomalin, 2015). This is the perspective adopted in this thesis.

### *Feminist dilemmas?*

Bringing religion into gender and development discourse and practice has presented some dilemmas for feminist analysis. Questions arise concerning what the 'de-privatization' of religion could mean for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights that are so central to the mainstream gender and development agenda. Pearson and Tomalin (2008, p. 47) identify three wider concerns arising from this 'turn to religion' in development practice. First, there is some fear that a turn to religion might 'undermine 35 years of mainstreaming gender equity objectives into development'. Second, it could be to the detriment of women in faith communities in developing countries, where they rely on international standards as a platform on which to base their struggles for equality in their respective faith communities. Third, development partnerships with faith communities might require consultation with those already in power (often male), which can reinforce patriarchal power structures. Pearson and Tomalin (2008) argue that while religion may play an important role in development, the analysis of religion in development requires using a gendered lens. This

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<sup>15</sup>Islamic feminism, emerging among Muslim women (and men) at different locations in the world in the 1990s, is grounded in an idea of gender equality as an integral part of the Quranic notion of equality of all human beings. According to Badran (2006, para. 2) it 'calls for the implementation of gender equality in the state, civil institutions, and everyday life. It rejects the notion of a public/private dichotomy (...) conceptualizing a holistic umma in which Qur'anic ideals are operative in all space'. For further discussion see for example Badran (2006) and Moghaddam (2002).

would, following Pearson and Tomalin (2008, p. 51), involve a critical gender analysis of how women and men in different contexts are included and affected by development interventions and processes.

*Approaches to the study of gender and religion*

In recent years, following the growth of religious grassroots movements around the world, scholars have turned attention to the meaning and impact of the participation of women and men in conservative, 'gender-traditional' religions (Burke, 2012). Scholars of gender and religion in particular, have enquired into how religious organizations and movements are affected by both secular and feminist discourses (Avishai, Jafar, & Rinaldo, 2015, p. 8). From the 1980s, research into the topic of women and Islam (notably Mernissi 1987; Moghadam 1994; Göle 1996) have in different ways contributed to scholarship which has developed a sophisticated analysis of how Islam shapes diverse forms of gendered agency (Ben Shitrit, 2013; Mahmood, 2005) and of how religion and modernity shape women's everyday life (Avishai et al., 2015). Another related strand of research has focused on how religious women have emerged as political actors as part of social movements in different parts of the world (Ahmad, 2011; Jeffery and Basu, 1998; Mahmood, 2005; Rinaldo, 2014). In these efforts, scholars have paid attention to the agency of religious women situated in seemingly oppressive contexts. These studies of gender and religion have been 'important correctives to the widespread assessment among sociologists and feminist scholars that women were inherently oppressed by religion' (Avishai et al., 2015, p. 9).

One of the scholars who has engaged most thoroughly with the role of religion in the field of gender and development, is Emma Tomalin. Drawing on cases from Thailand and Pakistan, Tomalin (2015, p. 63) notes how: 'Taking some examples of the ways in which women in Asia adopt and shape religious activity, which appear to be directed towards securing their interests and even empowerment, we cannot ignore the fact that these do not always neatly map onto secular liberal feminist goals of female and male equality in all spheres of life'.

In her study of Buddhist nuns working for the right of nuns to full ordinations in Thailand, Tomalin (2006) finds that motivations behind female nuns' activism are complex; some want to address gender inequalities in society, some want to practice religion on an equal level with their male counterparts. However, not all the nuns are motivated by a feminist agenda aiming at transforming gender relations in society, or by challenging patriarchal structures in Buddhism. Some nuns are instead emphasizing religious and



spiritual benefits. Others, again, do not want to take a higher level of ordination but are satisfied with their subordinate position in the religious hierarchy (Tomalin, 2006). Drawing in the work of Saba Mahmood (2005), Tomalin argues that ‘we need to (at least temporarily) suspend ... feminist judgment and to understand what “empowerment” means for women in these different subjective locations’ (Tomalin, 2015, p. 67).

A still under-researched area is the position and perspectives of women involved in development initiatives through religious arenas and organizations. We know little about the perspectives and experiences of women engaging in development in conservative religious contexts (Bano, 2009), and women in religious organizations often go unacknowledged as agents of development. In contexts where gender segregation is practised, studies focusing specifically on women are required in order to expose the gendered aspects of religion and development. This type of investigation is needed in order to provide insight into religious women’s own conceptions and practices of development, particularly so among women who do not advocate for women’s equality in all parts of life, and whose ideals do not neatly map onto mainstream gender equality objectives. This thesis aims to address parts of that knowledge gap through a specific focus on women’s activism in religio-political aid organizations in Pakistan (article 3).

### *Gender, religion, and migration*

The fact that migration and migrants’ transnational practices are gendered is well established (Carling, 2005; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Although religion has not been central to studies of gender and migration, new attention has been given to how migration contributes to shaping gendered religious identities. How gender roles are constructed and reproduced through religion in European migrant communities has also been addressed (Ryan & Vacchelli, 2013). Little, however, is known about the gendered dimensions of migrants’ transnational development engagements, particularly in religious contexts. This thesis sheds light on some aspects of the gendered dimensions of diaspora development engagements by analysing organized transnational Islamic charity (article 2).

### **2.3. Religion in the migration-development nexus**

Migrants are known to contribute to development in their countries of origin (De Haas, 2010; Faist, 2008, p. 22; Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear, & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002). In recent years, host and origin country governments have shown increased interest in facilitating

what has been called diaspora development<sup>16</sup> and the literature on diaspora contributions to development has surged.<sup>17</sup> This literature, however, has been critiqued for being based on assumptions that migrants' development engagements are the same as what development agencies do (Bakewell, 2008; Erdal, 2015; Sinatti & Horst, 2014). In agreement with this critique, I argue that it is necessary to move beyond instrumental and narrow approaches to migrants' development engagements and enquire into what migrants actually do (Mercer & Page, 2014; Raghuram, 2009).

When people migrate, Islamic charity often takes on transnational dimensions. People continue to give annual zakat and other voluntary alms, and what would have changed hands locally can also change hands across borders. In the transnational social field spanning Norway and Pakistan, Erdal (2012) finds that Islamic charity, such as zakat, is a significant part of migrants' remittances<sup>18</sup> in and beyond the household. In various parts of my thesis, I build on the work of Erdal (who is co-author of two of its articles).

Religious practice and institutions are increasingly being acknowledged as crucial to the study of transnational migration and immigrant integration and inclusion in Europe (Kivisto, 2014). Religious institutions such as mosques are recognized as important centres for transnational religion, which simultaneously facilitate integration and maintain migrants' ties to their countries of origin (Ryan & Vacchelli, 2013). Religious practices, including those performed in private domestic spheres, are 'important foci for analysis (as they are implicitly gendered), and acknowledge the agency of laypeople historically, and particularly women, in appropriating and customizing religious traditions' (Duffuor & Harris, 2013, p. 27).

Migration has contributed to new Muslim communities in Europe and to the construction of new Muslim identities and ways of practising Islam – including ways of practising Islamic charity (De Cordier, 2009a, 2009b; Juul Petersen, 2016; Salehin, 2016). Some of the largest and most well-established Muslim NGOs are headquartered in Europe, most notably Muslim Aid and Islamic Relief, originating in South Asian migrant communities in the UK. Variously labelled as transnational NGOs, FBOs, or migrant organizations, migrants' transnational engagement for development through religious

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<sup>16</sup> I define diaspora development as collective efforts to contribute to development in countries of origin or heritage, be they formally or informally organized.

<sup>17</sup> Although the main focus has been on the economic impacts of remittances (De Haas, 2005; Faist, 2008; De Haas, 2010; Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002), a growing, more practice-orientated literature examines how diasporas can contribute to development (Hammond et al., 2011; Horst et al., 2010).

<sup>18</sup> While Islamic charity can be conceptualized as a form of remittance, the study of remittances is beyond the scope of this thesis.

organizations has garnered growing interest in recent years (De Cordier, 2009a, 2009b; Khan, 2012; Juul Petersen, 2012). These studies tend to share a focus on formal organizations, all of which belong at one end of the organizational spectrum. Few studies have analysed the role of religious organizations and networks and less formal entities through which migrants give charity and organize for development in their countries of origin and beyond.

Although religion is recognized as a potentially significant factor in migrants' lives and continued engagement in their countries of origin (Basu & Werbner, 2002; Levitt, 2004, 2008; Rytter, 2014; Werbner, 2002), its role needs further unpacking. This thesis aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of religion in the diaspora development literature, at both organizational and motivational levels. Analysing how transnational Islamic charity is organized in the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo, I foreground religion vis-à-vis migrant development engagements in addition to bridging the divide between studies of more formal organizations and looser networks.

### 3. Theoretical and conceptual issues

‘Islamic charity’ is the conceptual prism through which I examine the relationship between religion, development, and gender. These three central concepts are introduced in the following sections, where I discuss how they are understood in the literature and how I use them in my analytical repertoire. This overarching framework unites the various underlying concepts and thereby lays the foundation for a discussion across articles in the conclusion of the thesis.

#### 3.1. Grasping religion

Central to my dissertation is the question of what it means for something to be religious or faith-based.<sup>19</sup> The enquiry rests on an understanding of religion as socially constructed. In line with Geertzian understandings of religion as ‘a universe of meaning’, people ascribe religious significance to their social practices, and virtually anything can be given religious significance through processes of *religionization* or *sacralization* (Woodhead & Heelas, 2000). Development aid is no exception (Juul Petersen, 2011, 2016).

Geertz (1973, p. 90) defines religion as a ‘(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic’. Religion brings people together in systems of meaning-making and belonging, systems that are deeply embedded within individuals and communities. Geertz’s understanding of religion marks a radical departure from earlier functionalist understandings and has informed numerous studies of religion and society. But it has also faced disapproval. Particularly relevant to my study of Islamic charity is Asad (1986) who, in his work on the anthropology of Islam, criticized Geertz for focusing too narrowly on the beliefs of the individual believers and less on embodied practices, discipline, and community. Asad (1986) argues that Islam can best be studied as a discursive tradition, which includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Quran and the Hadith. In his view, ‘Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs and morals. It is a tradition’ (Asad, 1986, p. 14). A tradition directs practice by linking the present to the future and to the past. Thus, ‘Islamic practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive traditions of

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<sup>19</sup> I use ‘religion’ and ‘faith’ interchangeably. Some scholars see religion as being the collective dimension of individual faith, which compromises personal beliefs (G. Clarke, 2008; Hefferan, 2015). But these dimensions, I find, are often so intertwined that they are impossible to distinguish empirically.

Islam, and is so taught to Muslims – whether by an *alim*, by *khatib*, a Sufi *shaykh* or an untutored parent’ (Asad, 1986, p. 15).<sup>20</sup> Asad criticizes not only Geertz, but also more broadly, the habit of delimiting religion as something separate from non-religious aspects of life, viewing this as a product of a particular development from the European Enlightenment. For Asad, this reflects a Western-centric understanding of religion based on Protestant Christianity, not appropriate for studies of other traditions such as Islam, Catholicism or Hinduism.

Rebuffing Asad, Lincoln (2010) is of the view that trying to define religion is about ‘clarifying one’s thoughts’. Lincoln (2010, p. 5) suggests a ‘polythetic and flexible delimitation of religion’, which includes (at a minimum) four domains that indicate the potentially all-encompassing or pervasive attributes of religion: (i) discourse (constant discourse, for example, over issues such as ‘what is the right Islam’); practices (through which people live and embody the religious discourse, for example, ‘doing Islam’); community (who construct their identity with reference to the religious discourse and its practices); and institutions (that reproduce or modify, through social relations, religious discourse and practice, and which ensure the continuity of the religious community over time). I find Lincoln’s delimitation of religion, emphasizing the importance of change and context, a helpful starting point for my own study. Combining insights from Lincoln and Asad, I therefore view religion as ‘tradition’.

A view of religion as tradition allows for a contextual reading of religion, in which understandings and analysis of ‘religion’ cannot be dissociated from social and historical processes. In the words of Deneulin (2009, p. 3), ‘seeing religion as tradition entails the recognition that religions are constantly evolving and changing according to their understanding of what it means to live well according to their core teaching, and what social practices best express it’. Deneulin and Bano (2009, p. 6) posit that religion is inseparable from development because ‘for its adherents, religion infuses all aspects of their lives, and this has implications for the way they understand what development processes and outcomes ought to be’. Hence, it is necessary to move beyond a secularist understanding of religion as something that should be kept in the private sphere, and instead approach religion as something that cannot be separated from people’s lives (Deneulin & Bano, 2009). Religion is part of defining what people think is ‘the good life’ (whatever that might be) and what ‘development’ means. Following this, and as argued by Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 5), it

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<sup>20</sup> *Alim*: ‘learned person’; *khatib*: ‘prayer leader’; *shaykh*: ‘master’.

is ‘a task ... to understand how religious discourses are embodied in certain social practices, how social and historical processes have led to that particular embodiment, and how the religion itself redefines its discourses and practices, in light of changing social, economic, and political context’.

### *Lived religion*

I approach the study of Islamic charity from a ‘lived religion’ perspective. Studying Somali women in Finland, Tiilikainen (2013) points out how some practices are considered by many of her research participants to be so ordinary that they do not really count as ‘real Islam’ or as religious practices worth studying. This observation mirrors my informants’ reflection on their everyday practice of Islamic charity. Many told me that if I wanted to learn about Islamic charity, I should talk to the imam. While my study did include interviews with some imams, as I explained to my research participants, my interest was not in what the Quran or the Sunnah says or how trained clergy interpret them. Rather, I wanted to know how practising Muslims interpret Islamic teachings, make sense of them and embody them in everyday life, in individual religious practices, in social activism and in development engagements.

While much scholarship on religion has considered formal organizations and taken official membership as a starting point for analysing the role of religion in social life, there is growing interest in the study of ‘lived religion’ (McGuire, 2008) or ‘everyday religion’ (Orsi, 2012). As Woodhead (2011, p. 133) points out, a lived-religion perspective does not disregard formal religious authorities such as beliefs and text, but rather studies how these become real ‘when embodied and lived out in actual social contexts’. Those contexts include individuals’ everyday rituals and the role of religion in various forms of organizations.

### *Everyday rituals and religiosity*

In the process of exploring how Islamic charity, as ideals and practices, is articulated and performed in everyday life, I draw on the notion of ‘*everyday rituals*’. This notion locates rituals – a well-established concept in sociology and anthropology – in the context of the everyday experience. I combine insights from existing research on migrants’ religious and non-religious rituals by referring to life-cycle rituals (Gardner & Grillo, 2002), and studies of lived religion (Amermann, 2006, 2014; McGuire, 2008) to connect the levels of ideals with those of practices. Rituals are understood as human actions which are expressions as well as reinforcements of particular ideals. Drawing on Gardner and Grillo (2002, p. 183), and

bringing in the idea of everyday, I understand rituals as being ‘everyday routinized activities and practices’, where meaning and activity, intention and outcome, are intertwined. When the concept of everyday rituals is applied to the context of transnational Islamic charity, everyday rituals not only translate ideals into practices, but also reinforce the same ideals through their continued enactment over time as well as across geographic space.

A focus on lived religion and everyday practices can shed light on how everyday life is – and simultaneously may not be – religious. This focus has the potential to add insight into the study of Muslim religiosity (Ammerman, 2014). I use religiosity to mean ‘how people are religious’,<sup>21</sup> referring to individuals’ subjective religious experiences and view these experiences as being multidimensional, including both beliefs and practices (Berghammer & Fliegenschnee, 2014). Hence, I approach the role of religion in people’s lives not as a dichotomy between ideals and practice, but as encompassing the ways in which people give meaning to their everyday lived experiences.

Studying Islamic charity and development, which are both formally and informally organized, I include not only religious organizations, but also *organized religion*. I explore how religious ideals and practices are enacted and situated in particular organizational contexts, including less formal structures and networks, and organizations that are not explicitly religious. ‘Organized religion’, according to Ammerman (1997, p. 5), ‘involves situations in which ritual and other religious activity introduce transcendent perspectives into social life’. This, she argues, makes it necessary ‘to look for the patterns of roles and structures in which these practices take place, both within recognized religious organizations and in other organizational spaces where religious persons, motives, and practices find expression’ (Ammerman, 1997, p. 5).

#### *Faith-based organizations (FBOs)*

What is meant by ‘faith-based’ is not self-evident. The category of FBO has been criticized for grouping together organizations that have little else in common, other than being loosely related to faith (Jones & Petersen, 2011, p. 1298). The concept has been extensively debated within the development studies literature, with little agreement over the precise definition of the term (Kirmani & Zaidi, 2010, p. 50). Clarke and Jennings (2008, p. 6), define FBO as ‘any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings

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<sup>21</sup> This is in contrast to understandings of religiosity as ‘how religious people are’. I am not using religiosity to measure the level of religiousness among the respondents in this study, although this understanding of religiosity has lent itself to quantitative analysis based on individual attendance at, for example, religious services (Rakodi, 2011, p. 8).

and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith', placing emphasis on motivation. Other scholars have developed more complex typologies which, in different ways, try to characterize the role of religion in FBOs. For example, Sider and Unruh (2004) conceptualize a continuum of religiosity, from 'faith saturated' to 'secular'.<sup>22</sup> Others again have chosen to use self-description as basis for categorization (Kirmani & Zaidi, 2010, p. 50). As noted by Tomalin (2012, p. 694) it is problematic to make sharp distinction between organizations that are faith-based and those that are not, particularly in contexts where 'religion permeates all aspects of life' and can be seen as reflecting a secular understanding of the relationship between the religious and the secular, which is not universal. In the context of Pakistan, for example, religion is implicit in many organizations, particularly those involved in charity and development-orientated activities (Kirmani & Zaidi, 2010, p. 24).<sup>23</sup>

In his analysis of relations between donors and FBOs, Clarke (2008, p. 32) distinguishes between passive and active deployment of faith.<sup>24</sup> Passive deployment of faith indicates that faith is subsidiary to broader humanitarian objectives, while an active deployment of faith places faith before humanitarian objectives. Inspired by Clarke (2008), I find it useful to think in terms of *explicit* versus *implicit* roles of religion in order to analyse the roles religion can take on vis-à-vis organizational modes (see article 2). I use implicit roles to refer to engagement expressed in development terms, where faith plays a role in motivating, mobilizing, and giving direction to what is done and when it takes place, and explicit roles to refer to engagement expressed and given meaning primarily in religious terms.

Religious practices may be individual or collective, organized in institutions at local, national, transnational, and global levels. Religion can be manifested as religious discourse, practice, community, and institution (Lincoln, 2010), and as embodied in people's everyday lives (Ammerman, 2014). In the words of Lincoln (2010, p. 33), 'nothing is religious per se',

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<sup>22</sup> Sider and Unruh's (2004) rather complex typology organizations range from faith-saturated, to faith-centred, faith-related, with a faith background, embodying a faith-secular partnership, to secular, assessed based on the organization's mission statement, foundational history, religiousness of the management and staff, affiliation with religious agencies, sources of finance, content of programmes, and working environment.

<sup>23</sup> Some organizations that explicitly use faith as a motivation (e.g. the Edhi Foundation, one of Pakistan's most respected charity organizations), and organizations linked to particular religious communities (e.g. the Aga Khan Foundation) do not use the label 'faith-based' about themselves, but frames their engagement in broader humanitarian terms (Iqbal and Siddiqui 2008; Kirmani & Zaidi, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> In his analysis of donor – FBO relations Clarke (2008) differentiates between 'active', 'passive', 'persuasive' and 'exclusive', the two latter categories indicating deployments of faith that respectively are proselytizing and discriminate against other faiths. While these categories are significant when analysing whether donors should support particular faith-based actors, they are less relevant for my analysis of religion and modes of organizing (article 2).



though many things can be religious by claiming transcendental authority and truth. What has been described as a process of ‘religionization’ or ‘sacralisation’ (Juul Petersen, 2011; Woodhead & Heelas, 2000) takes place when things, people, institutions, ideas, inter alia, are given meaning through religious discourse, practices, communities, and institutions (Lincoln 2010), including, as pointed out by Juul Petersen (2011), ‘aid’ and ‘development’.

### **3.2. Conceptualizing development**

In this thesis I set out to explore how Islamic charity – its ideals and practices – relate to conceptions and practices of development. As noted in the introduction, I use ‘Islamic charity’ to broadly describe religiously framed normative ideals and practices that in some way help – monetarily or through voluntary or paid work – the needy, and contribute to societal development. The category of Islamic charity is a broader category than an understanding of charity as distribution of alms alone (discussed below). Islamic charity as practised by individuals and organizations, forms part of systems that aim both to mitigate suffering and to contribute to longer-term sustainable development (Benthall & Bellion-Jordan, 2003; Juul Petersen, 2016). Islamic charity and development – in the form of discourses and practices – are built around values and norms. Islamic charity also encompasses moral and transcendental dimensions. How these are shaping the actors conception and practices of Islamic charity, and in extension of ‘development’, is part of the enquiry in this thesis.

What development means, however, is not self-evident; it means very different things to different actors in different contexts. One of the issues that makes the concept unclear is that it is a term used by those experiencing development processes, by those working in development, and by those who study development. ‘Development’ is both an emic and an etic category, creating what Cunningham (1999) has described as a ‘representational conundrum’ (cited in Juul Petersen, 2016, p. 186). Below, I will discuss different conceptions of development, and the ways I use this and related terms in the thesis.

#### *Development as a normative and analytical concept*

For people working in the development field, development is often used normatively to refer to some sort of improvement from the current condition. Helping people in need, reducing poverty, generating economic growth, creating sustainable change and transforming people’s lives, are all objectives that commonly are associated with ‘development’. While these different understandings of development are sometimes presented as value-neutral,

development actors and scholars are quick to contest that. In the words of Nederveen Pieterse, (2010, p. 3), development can be defined as ‘the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement’. What different actors consider to be the end goal of development, and the strategies and approaches actors believe are required to achieve those ends, reflect normative, value-based, and ideological positions. In this thesis I do not apply a normative definition of what development is; instead, I seek to understand what meaning the actors in this study give to their religious practice, social activism, and to development engagements. I use the term as an analytical tool.

The literature frequently notes two distinct, albeit interrelated, ways of conceptualizing development that are useful for the current study: these are ‘intentional development’ and ‘immanent development’. Intentional development is targeted, active interventions in society with the intention to improve the situation; while immanent development describes processes that unfold over time, resulting from broader social and political change (Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Mitlin, Hickey & Bebbington, 2007). Cowen and Shenton (1996) trace the emergence of the idea of intentional development to the 19th century, as a way to deal with the social disorder in Europe caused by immanent processes of development. Similar to the distinction between intentional and immanent development is Hart’s (2001) distinction between ‘little d’ and ‘big D’ development. The former refers to ‘geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory’ processes underlying capitalist developments, while the latter refers to the ‘project of intervention in the “third world” that emerged in a context of decolonization and the cold war’ (Hart, 2001, p. 650 cited in Mitlin et al., 2007, p. 1701). As with Hart’s (2001) conceptualization, the idea of intentional development is often reduced to mean ‘development aid’, or ‘what aid actors do’, ignoring actors situated outside the institutionalized field of development aid. I find the distinction between ‘development as an intentional activity’ and ‘development as an immanent and unintentional process’ (Cowen & Shenton, 1996) useful, in that it opens for a broader conception of what actors, institutions, discourses, and practices we include in the analysis of development. It also draws attention to the broader processes of social change produced by local, national, and transnational actors, in which development aid is always just one part. In practice, however, the distinction between intentional and unintentional development is more difficult to discern, as diverse actors such as governments, intergovernmental organizations, national and international NGOs, and also women’s prayer groups, interact at various levels. These interactions contribute both intentionally and unintentionally to the processes of social change.

Development theories as theories of social change, draw on a variety of social science disciplines and approaches, and development theorists have contested ways of understanding both what explains development (and ‘underdevelopment’), and how these concepts should be understood to make meaning of these processes.<sup>25</sup> Modernization theory – chiefly concerned with how to create the conditions for economic growth – dominated development theory in the 1950s and 1960s (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). When the economic growth experienced by many developing countries in this period failed to trickle down and reach the poor, new theories emerged. From the 1970s onwards, dependency theory and related perspectives became influential among development theorists and policymakers, leading to policies aiming at reaching the poor through the ‘basic needs approach’ (International Labour Organization, 1976, cited in Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011, p. 46).

As mentioned in the introduction, the past three decades have witnessed a pluralization of discourses and practices in mainstream development. The emergence of neo-liberalist theories, ‘alternatives to development’ and post-development theory, as well as the human development paradigm have all made room for new and multiple understandings of development, including its immaterial dimensions. The focus on religion in development and faith-based actors is testament to this. Yet, despite greater plurality in meaning and approaches to development than ever before, mainstream actors (the United Nations [UN], the World Bank, major NGOs and donors agencies) can arguably be seen as privileging secular and material conceptions of development of and approaches to development aid (Tomalin, 2015).

Development is concerned with values, norms, and ideology. These influence how actors approach development, what they aim to achieve, who should be doing development, who should be beneficiaries of aid, and what their role in development processes should be. When ideas of intentional development emerged in mid-19th century Europe and its colonies, it was mainly considered a state practice (Nustad, 2001). Colonial development projects were linked to imperial rule, to the extraction of raw materials, and to opening up of new territories (van Laak, 2010; Ziltener & Künzler, 2013). For these processes, people were needed; the colonial officers took it upon themselves to develop the people in the colonies. Inherent in the idea of intentional development is the notion of trusteeship (Cowen & Shenton, 1996), the idea that those who consider themselves as developed are responsible for

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<sup>25</sup>For good overviews of the trends in development theory see Nederveen Pieterse (2010), Peet and Hearwick, (2009), Molteberg and Bergstrøm (2000). Further discussion of diverse development theories is considered outside the scope of this thesis.

guiding the development of those who are not (Nustad, 2001). A view of progress as a replication of the West, has been central to most conventional development theories post-World War II, and has guided development interventions such as the United States-financed Marshall plan for the reconstruction of post-war Europe, but also contemporary neo-liberal development policy (Nederveen Pieterse, 2010).

Whereas newer approaches to development criticize top-down approaches and emphasize participation, this does not do away with the idea of guided intervention. Intentional development processes are initiated with specific objectives in mind and, as Nustad (2001, p. 481) notes, ‘although developers portray themselves as “facilitators”, they still know where the process ought to be heading’. As such, the notion of guided intervention entails beliefs in reform and improvement. It is found among colonial officers and missionaries, but also among contemporary development actors in terms of training people, and consciousness-raising (Stirrat, 2008). Development can be seen to encompass a notion of improvement and reform not only of institutions but of individuals, and as involving not only material improvement, but also improvement through changing norms and values.

#### *Charity, welfare, humanitarian relief, and development aid/investment*

As points of reference, I briefly discuss four concepts relevant to this study that, in broad terms, denote different approaches to improving wellbeing through intentional interventions: charity, welfare, humanitarian relief, and development aid.

Charity is commonly understood as donations of money or food to people – given as generous and benevolent acts to suffering people (see for example Merriam-Webster, 2017a). Charity is common in all religious traditions, often being a central part of an individual’s religious practice, but also as a source of inspiration for collective efforts, seen for example in the many NGOs operating in the aid and development sector today having their origin in religious traditions (Bornstein, 2009). In contrast to humanitarian relief, whose central intention is to save lives here and now, almsgiving in both Christian and Islamic traditions is part of religious practice and involves transcendental dimensions. This makes Islamic charity not only relevant to relieving suffering, but also to the Islamic tradition concerned with ‘giving in the way of God’. It involves a dual motivation of helping the needy while at the same time accruing personal religious rewards. Charity, as donations of money or food, is often criticized for not contributing to sustainable change – seen by some as perpetuating and even reifying existing inequalities (Drake, 1996; Kapoor, 2012).

Welfare is a concept commonly used to describe interventions that aim to improve people's wellbeing by the provision of services that cover basic needs, such as access to health and education (Merriam-Webster, 2017b). Often associated with the 'welfare state' emerging in Europe in the 19th century, the provision of welfare services also became part of the colonial apparatus (Midgley, 2016). In countries where the state does not have the capacity or the will to provide for basic needs or deliver welfare services to its citizens, private actors, often in the form of NGOs, take on welfare and service delivery functions (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). While charity has been central to the Islamic tradition from its inception, welfare organizations emerged with Islamic reformist movements like the Jamaat-e-Islami political party in Pakistan and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East (Juul Petersen, 2011, p. 75). The Al Khidmat Foundation, for instance, was initially formed as the welfare wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan (Bano, 2008). As these organizations have developed over the years, they are still commonly called 'welfare organizations', even if their programmatic priorities and activities have changed to include both activities that can be described as humanitarian relief and longer-term development aid (see article 4).

Humanitarian relief denotes a tradition of aid which aims to provide impartial, independent, and neutral provision of aid to those in immediate danger and harm (Barnett, 2005). Its origins are rooted in Christian charity ideals, and in the law of war in European and colonial contexts (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). Emphasizing the concept of neutrality, closely related to universalist notions of a common humanity, humanitarian organizations contributed in the past to depoliticize relief-orientated activities (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). Since the 1980s, the scale, scope, and impact of humanitarian action have expanded significantly, contributing to a transformation of humanitarianism. According to Barnett (2005, p. 723) its purpose has now been politicized and the field institutionalized. Whereas once humanitarian actors attempted to insulate themselves from the world of politics, they now work closely with states and attempt to eliminate the root causes of conflict that place individuals at risk. During the 1990s, humanitarian actors – and the field of humanitarianism – became more professionalized, bureaucratized, and rationalized (Barnett, 2005, p. 725).

The term 'development aid', as noted above, is commonly used to describe intentional interventions to aid broader development processes, which grew from colonial concerns with progress and civilization (Juul Petersen, 2016). Development aid was institutionalized in the international aid system in the post-World War II period in the West (Tomas and Boli, 1999; Barnett, 2005). As noted by Bakewell, 'The ideas and world of development aid [can be seen] as a distinct area of practice, conducted by development

organizations staffed by development professionals, and often informed by academics engaged in development studies' (Bakewell, 2008, pp. 1342–1343). Development aid is commonly understood in terms of developed countries aiding developing countries. However, developing countries' governments can also be seen as actors in development, steering economic and social policies, regulating the space for development activities and investing in social and economic development.

Humanitarian relief and development aid are two approaches to aid, both originating in the West (Juul Petersen, 2016; Bornstein & Redfield, 2011). When referring to the discourses and practices of mainstream development in this study, I draw on Juul Petersen (2016) and include in this both humanitarian and development approaches. I refer to these as 'humanitarian relief and development aid', and 'aid and development'. While there are substantial differences between humanitarian relief and development aid, for the purpose of the present analysis, it makes sense to view them as part of the same aid tradition. As Juul Petersen (2016) points out, most development actors are today involved in both development and humanitarian aid; they share core values, relate to the same discourses and practices, and rely on the same funding structures.

Charity, welfare, humanitarian relief, and development aid represent different types of intentional intervention to help people in need, or contribute to societal development. While the concepts can be seen as originating at different times, in different traditions, and as motivated by different norms and values, they can also be used to describe different approaches to improving wellbeing. In their study of the role of faith in the charity and development sector in Karachi, Kirmani and Zaidi (2010, p. 59), distinguish between approaches that are charity or welfare-orientated, and those that are development-orientated. Those concerned with charity or welfare are described as being short-term, often one-off interactions with communities through provision of material assistance and relief, while development-orientated approaches focus on longer-term engagements with communities, with the aim of making individuals and communities self-sufficient through training, income generation, and community mobilization. In the context of this thesis, it is useful to distinguish aid approaches that are for short-term relief of immediate suffering and covering basic needs, from the longer-term efforts that aim to make individuals and communities self-reliant and contribute to longer-term social, economic, and political change.

*How I use the term 'development' in this thesis*

In the four articles making up the core of this thesis, I explore how various actors under study (such as migrants, religious women activists, and Muslim NGOs) engage in development. When doing this I use 'development' to refer to intentional interventions to improve the current conditions, what Cowen and Shenton (1996) call 'intentional development'. I use 'development engagements' as a broad term to refer to the different ways actors take part in planned activities to assist people in need and improve the current situation. In this understanding of development, I include not only those discourses and practices that are explicitly framed in the language of the international development community (Bakewell, 2008), but also those framed in religious terms. In this thesis I take a 'bottom-up' approach, listening to the reflections of the research participants with the aim of exploring what these actors set out to do, what they do to achieve it, and how they give meaning to what they do.

Additionally, since my interest lies in exploring the relationship between religious practice and development engagements, I explore the discourses and practices of the actors in this study in relation to dominant discourses and practices of development aid that originates in and is dominated by Western donor countries and institutions (Juul Petersen, 2016; Tvedt, 2006). In the articles, I variably refer to these discourses and practices as 'mainstream development', 'development aid', 'aid and development' and, sometimes, which I realize might be a source of confusion, simply as 'development'. This image of one monolithic culture of development aid can of course be questioned. It will necessarily be a simplification of a tradition of aid, which contains heterogeneous discourses and practices, also within the mainstream. As argued by Juul Petersen (2011, p. 65), however, in contrast to Islamic traditions of aid, it is possible to distinguish 'a Western culture of development aid which in large part was initiated by Western colonial states, institutionalized by intergovernmental organizations and popularized by NGOs'. With time, this system of development aid has 'become a hegemonic, institutionalized aid culture against which all other aid cultures are measured, setting the standards for international aid' (Juul Petersen, 2011, p. 65).

*Broadening conceptions of actors in development*

Development actors are commonly understood as actors who are involved in intentional development, who work in governments, development agencies, and NGOs in various ways to intervene in societies with the aim of improving the current conditions. The actors in focus

in the current study are not commonly considered as development actors. They are however actors in civil society, locally and transnationally, who intentionally and unintentionally through their discourses and practices make claims regarding what a good society should be, and thereby work to effect social change alongside other development actors such as the state, the private sector, and civil society.

The actors in this study are also very different from each other: at one end of the scale are the formal, and highly professional aid organizations (such as the Al Khidmat Foundation and the Minhaj Welfare Foundation); at the other end of the scale are individual Muslims participating in informal religious gatherings. Although they are tied together through transnational networks, they are shaped by the context in which they are located and are situated differently vis-à-vis the institutionalized field of development aid. The relevance of discourses and practices of development aid varies among the different actors in the study; how they relate or do not relate to these discourses and practices is part of what this thesis explores. In order to understand how actors situated at the periphery of the mainstream aid and development field engage in intentional interventions to improve current conditions, I believe it is necessary to widen conceptions of actors in development, and to focus on ‘actually existing civil society’ (Mohan, 2002).

#### *Discourses and practice of Islamic charity and development*

Finally, this thesis is concerned with how religious ideals and practices of Islamic charity relate to discourses and practices of development. I explore how ideals and practices of Islamic charity – understood as part of the Islamic discursive tradition (Asad, 1993) – shape how people engage in development, and how these actors relate to other discourses and practices, particularly those associated with the Western-origin tradition of development aid. I do not use ‘development’ as a predefined, normative category, but aim instead to understand what ‘development’ means to the actors in this study.

Through discourse and practice, actors, as individuals or collectives, give meaning to what they do. ‘Discourse’ is understood here as cultural constructions implied in expressing, either verbally or through social practice, points of view or value perspectives (Long, 2001, p. 18). Through discourse and practice, actors give meaning to Islamic charity, aid, and development (for example, in defining who are rightful recipients of aid, and what activities are appropriate). In this thesis I set out to explore the multiple discourses and practices related to the concepts of ‘Islamic charity’, ‘aid’ and ‘development’ that are ‘produced, contested and reworked by different actors in different contexts’ (Lewis, 2003, p. 546). To



do so, I have enquired into what the different actors understand as an ideal society, what they believe is required to create it, and what they actually do in order to achieve their goals.

### **3.3. Approaching gender**

How we understand and conceptualize gender impacts on the way in which we analyse social life and the interactions between actors and institutions. Multiple and competing conceptualizations of gender are informed by a range of perspectives, from social constructivism to socio-biology, and they shape understandings of what gender is, along with approaches to gender and development. These reflect diverse theoretical and epistemological positions. As such, conceptualization of gender reflects different ‘views of the world’ (Nyborg, 2002), which affect how we study gender and incorporate it into analysis.

In this thesis, I understand gender as socially constructed. Thus, ‘gender’ refers to the culturally constructed differences and relationships between males and females in a given society (Ortner, 1981). Gender norms define what society considers appropriate male or female behaviour, and contribute to the construction of what I call ‘gender ideologies’ denoting how gender norms shape what are considered ideal gender roles and relations. Gender ideologies can be seen as reflecting the norms and expectations of society or of particular groups. The concept of gender ideologies is useful for the analysis of how institutions, discourses, and practices are gendered. Gender norms are produced in particular contexts, at particular times, as part of processes that shape and are shaped by social relations and practices (Ortner, 1981). This means that culturally constructed differences and relationships between males and females are not a set of static structures or roles, but rather can be understood as constructed and experienced through a shuffle of social institutions, from the family to the state. The analysis of gender can be extended beyond social relations between the sexes and applied to institutions such as ‘the family, marriage, kinship, the market, religion, the state and so on’ (Naher, 2006, p. 18). Social constructivist approaches to the study of gender emphasize the existence of multiple worlds, multiple realities, and multiple identities, allowing for the existence of many different ways of being a man or being a woman. Hence, gender ideologies are not constants; they are produced in particular contexts and differ across cultures and time, influenced by their particular social, political, and religious environments. The way in which gender is ‘done’ intersects with other attributes such as class, age, ethnicity. This necessitates an analysis of gender, religion, and development that takes these intersections into account (Avishai et al., 2015).

In the current study, when I focus my attention on the gendered dimension of Islamic charity in the context of two conservative religio-political movements, I relate to two concepts central to the study of gender and development, and gender and religion: these are gender equality and (religious) women's agency.

*Gender equality, equity, and complementarity*

The concepts of gender equality and women's rights have become integral to the rights-based agenda dominant among mainstream development actors; they are the key concepts in all major international agreements from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979 to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Although frequently presented as a 'universal norm' (Thomas, 2007, p. 600), and often taken as a 'given concept' in gender and development policy (Selbervik & Østberg, 2013; Cornwall, 2007a), the meaning of 'gender equality' is highly contested.

In mainstream gender and development discourses, 'gender equality' is commonly understood as equality between women and men in all spheres of life, encompassing not only equal access and opportunities, but also transformation of patriarchal gender relations as a means to empower women (Tomalin, 2013, p. 153). This understanding of gender equality, dominant in GAD approaches, is often associated with an emancipatory, feminist agenda. However, this understanding is not universal. Østebø (2015, p. 2) questions whether 'it is at all possible to talk about gender equality as a universal norm, unconditionally fixed, independent of historical and cultural context'. In her study of gender equality norms in Eritrea, Østebø notes how differing visions of gender equality are produced in the interface of global gender equality norms and local discourse and practices, including both gender equality based on notions of sameness, and gender equality based on notions of complementarity (Østebø, 2015, p. 7).

The understanding of gender equality can be related to how the terms 'gender' and 'equality' are understood, reflecting gender ideologies.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned above, gender

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<sup>26</sup> Acknowledging 'difference' in the equality debate is, however, as noted by Østebø (2015), not unproblematic. Among feminist scholars and activists there has been a fear that recognition of difference would run the risk of essentialism, of reifying women's traditional roles and justifying inequality between the sexes (Bock & James, 1992; Østebø, 2015). Within feminist discourse there have been long-standing debates over 'the right to be equal' and 'the right to be different' (Østebø, 2013). This dualistic conceptualization of equality vs difference, however, has been critiqued by scholars who argue that these should not be seen as opposites, as one does not exclude the other (Scott, 1988, Holli, 1997). In the words of Holli (1997, p.139), 'equality does not mean an elimination of difference, nor does the recognition of difference exclude equality'.

ideologies and related notions of gender equality can be divided between those based on sameness, and those based on complementarity (Predelli, 2004; Østebø, 2013). While gender ideologies based on sameness view men and women as intrinsically the same and commonly promote gender role interchangeability, gender ideologies based on complementarity see women and men as intrinsically different and tend to promote gender role complementarity. Gender ideologies based on complementarity commonly promote gender role specialization, which can be seen as reflecting ‘an appreciation of the different qualities and strengths that each gender brings’ (Page & Yip, 2016). As noted by Shaw (1998), gender complementarity denotes a ‘dualistic view of humanity in which men and women are seen as essentially different from each other, and are often thought in that “difference” to display “complementarity” ’ (Shaw, 1998, p. 14 cited in Page & Yip, 2016, p. 12). Gender ideologies based on difference and complementarity are found across religious, cultural, and geographical contexts (Avishai et al., 2015; Ben Shitrit, 2013; Østebø, 2015). In gender ideologies based on complementarity, gender equality is understood as men and women being equal (in worth) but as having different and complementary roles, rights, and duties. Gender ideologies based on complementarity are found among conservative religious movements promoting gender ideologies in which ideal gender roles and relations, rights, and responsibilities are defined by biological differences, reflecting what they understand as God-given, ontological differences between men and women (Burke, 2012; Predelli, 2004). As mentioned above, these ideologies – and related notions of gender equality – change over time, their strength being influenced by changes in political, social and economic conditions (as witnessed in the European context, see for example Nyhagen and Halsaa, 2016).

Gender equality based on difference and complementarity, as found in patriarchal, conservative religious movements like the ones in this study, clearly breaks with feminist understandings of gender equality, women’s rights, and empowerment dominant in gender and development discourse. The post-colonial and poststructuralist feminist theorizing of gender and religion places emphasis on women’s situated subjectivities, and view women’s own experiences as shaping and being shaped by particular historical and geographical contexts, as well as the intersections of religion, gender and broader class-based identities. Drawing on these insights, it is possible to enquire into how gender equality, women’s rights, and ideal womanhood are understood and practised (by women and men) in religious contexts.

*Religious women's agency*

The participation of women in conservative 'orthodox' or 'fundamentalist' religious movements is often presented as a paradox. Why do women participate in religious movements that can be seen as subjugating them to patriarchal norms? Presenting women's participation in conservative religion as a paradox assumes a priori that agency and religion are incongruent (Avishai, 2008; Iqtidar, 2011). Seeing women's participation in conservative religion as a paradox can also be viewed as the 'understanding of agency as purposeful conduct and the association of purposeful conduct with extra religious ends' (Avishai, 2008, p. 410). In other words, this view holds that religion cannot be an end in itself. Religion is frequently seen as constraining women's action within religio-political movements, particularly 'Islamist'<sup>27</sup> movements, as some see Islamism as partly defined by its misogyny (see Iqtidar, 2011).

What has been described as a post-secular turn in social sciences is also evident in feminist studies. The 'de-privatization' of religion has required new interpretations of gender roles and relations and new ways of conceptualizing women's agency, including in religious contexts. Over the past two decades a large body of work on how women negotiate their lives within patriarchal systems have developed (Göle, 1996; Griffith, 1997; Kandiyoti, 1988; Mahmood, 2005). In this literature, feminist scholars of religion have shed light on religious women's agency, attempting to overcome characterizations of 'religious women as victims or dupes when their beliefs differ from secular feminist understandings of gender equality' (Burke, 2012). Braidotti (2008, p. 2) posits that the post-secular turn 'challenges European feminism because it makes manifest the notion that agency, or political subjectivity, can actually be conveyed through and supported by religious piety, and may even involve significant amounts of spirituality'. This involves a change in the conceptualization of women's agency, viewing it as not only performed through acts of resistance to existing norms – but as subject formation, via processes of self-styling that involve 'complex and continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values' (Braidotti, 2008, p. 2). New, more nuanced understandings of women's agency and subject formation

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<sup>27</sup> 'Islamism' and 'Islamist' are widely used terms in the literature on political Islam. Their usage underlines the political and ideological, rather than simply 'religious' character of movements such as the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamal, 2013, p. 7). 'Islamist' is commonly applied to distinguish religio-political actors from non-political religious actors. However, Islamist actors are diverse, and as pointed out by scholars of gender and Islamism in the Middle East, there is a need 'to recognize the variations and range of Islamist groups and their differing gender ideologies and visions. Analytically, it is important to consider the specific historical and current context of specific Islamist parties and groups' (Al-Ali, 2012, p. 31). Still, in this study of Islamic charity and development, I chose to use the more descriptive term 'religio-political', thus avoiding the connotations attached to the term 'Islamist' in contemporary politics and media debates.

have been developed by diverse feminist scholars (see for example Avishai, 2008; Ben Shitrit, 2013; Harding, 2000; Mahmood, 2005). Yet, as noted by Bilge (2010), many secular-liberal feminist scholars have seemed unable to seriously engage with the religious beliefs of their research participants. As a consequence, conceptions of women's agency often remain within a paradigm where religion is taken as a constraining influence from the outset, instead of engaging with religion and analysing it as a social category that, among other categories (such as race or ethnicity, class, age and gender), ought to be considered when analysing gender and development in contexts where religion potentially plays a role (Tomalin, 2015).

*Studying 'anti-feminist' religious women's activism in Pakistan*

In her study of the women's mosque movement in Cairo, Mahmood draws attention to the tension within feminism which she attributes to 'its dual character as both an *analytical* and a *politically prescriptive* project' (Mahmood, 2005, p. 10 [emphasis in original]). Mahmood (2005, p. 157) argues that separating the two allows for a feminist theorization that opens up for other modalities of actions. In doing so, however, Mahmood has been criticized for being 'culturalist', for adopting a cultural-relativist position in which women's rights are sacrificed in order to 'preserve other life forms' (Bangstad, 2011; Van der Veer, 2008). Contrary to these criticisms however, I find Mahmood's distinction between analytical and political feminism has value. In order to make sense of women's activism and gain insights into their conceptions and practices of development, I believe it is necessary to set aside feminist judgment and instead enquire into how women make sense of their worlds.

Some of the women in this study are self-proclaimed anti-feminists. They do not seek to challenge patriarchy, and are instead endorsing and advocating for a social order in which women submit to male authority. I will be careful not to (mis)attribute some feminist consciousness to these women (Abu-Lughod 1990, p. 47). These women adhere to religio-political ideologies with interpretations of Islam that are largely incompatible with notions of full gender equality. From a feminist perspective, the way gender equality is understood by women and men in these movements can be seen as reifying women's (as well as men's) 'traditional' roles and as justifying women's subordinate position. As this thesis will reveal, however, they do not passively reproduce tradition, but actively negotiate gender ideologies.

With this study I do not aim to analyse whether these actors contribute to or detract from gender equality goals. Rather, I set out to explore what these women do and why they do it, and how they position themselves vis-à-vis competing discourses on gender equality

and women's rights existing in contemporary Pakistan. Through a focus on women's own experiences and reflections upon their experiences, I attempt to understand how these women activists give meaning to what they do, taking into account the specific social, cultural, political, and historical context in which these women are situated. In choosing this focus for the study, my aim is not to contribute to feminist emancipatory agenda, or to facilitate social change, as is common among gender and development study scholars (Tomalin, 2015). My interest in studying these women organizations rests in a belief in a diverse production of knowledge also about actors who are different to oneself, in this case actors who are rarely the focus of research by development studies scholars, perhaps precisely because they are operating within a different normative framework.

#### **4. Methodological perspectives**

A research methodology is composed of approaches to research, and the perspectives one applies, to examine the research subject. Studying the relationship between Islamic charity and development, with a particular focus on gendered and transnational dimensions, has been an explorative process (Molteberg & Bergstrom, 2000; Nyborg, 2002). I have drawn on and combined research perspectives and methodological approaches from a diverse set of social science and humanistic fields including development studies, sociology, anthropology, history of religion, Islamic studies, geography, and gender studies.

The overall research questions in this thesis focus on the ideals and practices of Islamic charity and how they relate to discourses and practices of aid and development. As such, I take into account what people think and what they do; how they make sense of, and give meaning to what they do; and how meaning is expressed through their practice.

I understand knowledge as socially constructed, thus situated in time and space and within relations of power. This has implications for my line of enquiry, my research questions, the methodological approach, and the methods I use. Research methodologies are partly shaped by the ideas and experiences one hold before one start the research, while others are discovered during the process. What follows is an outline of the central methodological perspectives adopted in this thesis. They include perspectives on and from actors, discourse and practice, social fields, and transnational dimensions.

##### **4.1. An actor-orientated perspective**

Studying the relationship between Islamic charity and development, I adopt an actor-orientated perspective. I draw in particular on Long's (2001) sociology of development, whereby he outlines an approach to actor-orientated and constructionist analysis, but also on other more recent contributions placing actors at the centre of analysis, such as in the study of NGOs (Hilhorst, 2003; Juul Petersen, 2016) and in migration studies. In the latter, the emphasis is transferred from actors as individual and autonomous, to actors as situated in particular social contexts (Page & Mercer, 2012). The introduction of an actor-orientated approach involved a shift in focus from structural analysis, which had long dominated development studies. Long (2001, p. 1) criticizes development theorists for espousing 'various forms of determinism, linearity and institutional hegemony'. In his view, studies of development had 'become people-less and obsessed with the conditions, context and "driving forces" of social life rather than with the self-organizing practices of those

inhabiting, experiencing, and transforming the contours and details of the social landscape’ (Long, 2001, p.1).

The actor-orientated perspective can be seen as part of a broader contextual turn in the social sciences: a turn away from structural explanations to finding ways to include both structures and agency and how these are interrelated (Giddens, 1984). This does not mean that structures are unimportant, but that a focus on structures alone cannot explain social practice. I find the actor-orientated approach to be appropriate for my thesis because it permits the study of actors as meaning-makers, situated in particular social contexts. It is a productive departure from studies that take structural, instrumental, and normative approaches to the study of religion and development.

Actor-orientated approaches have been criticized for methodological individualism,<sup>28</sup> for placing too much emphasis on individuals’ agency, and for not taking into account the structural constraints and conditions that actors operate within. However, actors are not necessarily seen as independent of the context in which they exist, but rather as situated in particular social and historical contexts. An actor-orientated approach can emphasize the centrality of actors, focusing not only on actors in isolation, but also on the *interactions* of various actors. In this thesis I include in my understanding of actors both individuals and organizations. Islamic charity is manifested as very personal, individual religious practices, and as collective organizing for development. This combination of perspectives is thus fruitful for grasping how diverse dimensions of ‘Islamic charity’ relate to, intersect with, or – in the words of Long (2001) – interface<sup>29</sup> with discourses and practices of development.

Following Long (2001, p. 56), I understand actors as entities who can formulate vision and rationales and act upon them; actors can make decisions. As such, the agency of actors is central to the actor-orientated approach. The relationship between structures and agency has been one of the fundamental questions in social theory. Human agency, most basically defined as the ability of an individual to act, is both constrained and enabled by social structures (Giddens, 1987, p. 11). In liberal philosophical theory, agency is commonly understood as ‘people’s capacity to make choices and take action in the worlds’ (Rinaldo,

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<sup>28</sup> Methodological individualism seeks to explain social behaviour in terms of individual motivations, intentions and interests. This is criticized for paying too little attention to structures, constraining or enabling actors’ choices and behavioural space (Long, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Following Long (2001, p. 243), I understand ‘interface’ as a ‘critical point of intersection between lifeworlds, social fields or levels of social organization, where *social discontinuities*, based upon discrepancies in values, interests, knowledge and power, are most likely to be located’. For an in-depth discussion on studying knowledge interfaces, see Long (2001, p. 191).



2014, p. 826), placing emphasis on individuals autonomy and intention – often in the form of resistance to existing structures (Mahmood, 2005).

When enquiring into the relationship between women’s religious activism and their development engagement (see article 3), it is useful to draw on conceptions of agency that are contextual. In so doing, I acknowledge that what determines agency must be understood as a product of particular historical and situated contexts. A contextual approach helps highlight the diverse roles of actors in development and allows for an analysis that takes into account people’s lived experiences. An actor-orientated approach to the study of development fits well with the study of ‘lived’ or ‘everyday religion’ (as discussed in section 3.1). The actor-orientated perspective also permits inclusion in the analysis of actors who are not physically present, but who nonetheless influence the situation, thereby affecting actions and outcomes (Long, 1992, p. 13). This also works well with a transnational perspective and the move away from ‘methodological nationalism’<sup>30</sup> (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). As pointed out by Erdal (2013, p. 985), ‘engaging directly with the messy reality of lived experiences provides an opportunity for analysis that adopts the transnational perspective of migrants’ own lives and, at the same time, acknowledges the significance of their agency’.

Actor-orientated studies of NGOs have introduced an understanding of NGOs as complex actors, situated in particular historical and political contexts. In this literature, NGOs are viewed as claims-making and meaning-making actors (Hilhorst, 2003; Juul Petersen, 2011), with attention on the discourses and practices of NGOs. This brings focus to the actors’ own understanding of development, and to analysing how they conceptualize ‘Islam’, ‘aid’, and ‘development’ – that is, ‘how they produce, contest and present meaning, in the process making claims to legitimacy’ (Juul Petersen 2011, p. 31). This is of particular relevance to the study of religion and organizational legitimacy (see below, and refer to article 4).

### *Discourse and practice*

Discourse and practice are central to my main enquiry (particularly to Research Question 1). This thesis embraces a broad understanding of discourse, viewing it not as a coherent and fixed set of ideas, but as assemblages of ideas, values, and practices produced and reproduced at the interface between diverse social actors (Long 2001, p. 18). A focus on

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Methodological nationalism’ refers to taking the nation-state to equate with society. To view the nation-state as a natural boundary for study has been common in the social sciences. Transnational approaches and multi-sited research represents a departure from methodological nationalism.

practice includes attention to what actors do, as individuals, or as representatives of formal organizations and looser, more informal groups, networks and organizations (Long 2001, p. 53). This includes actors' everyday doings, as members of organizations, as duty holders, as pious individuals, as family members. Thus, social practice is not separate from discourse, but rather part of it (Long, 2001, p. 18). Discourses shape the 'life worlds' or 'institutional environments' in which actors operate. Drawing on Grillo and Stirrat (1997, p. 1), a discourse of 'development' – or of 'Islamic charity' – 'identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of doing as well as speaking and thinking about it'.

The power of discourse lies in its ability to provide legitimacy for certain kinds of knowledge while undermining other kinds. However, discourses are not fixed. Discourses change with context and vary with the ideological and political perspective of the actors involved in the production, use, appropriation, manipulation, or countering of discourses (Long 2001, p. 52). This echoes Arce and Long (2000, p. 23), who underscore how 'rather than premise one's views of knowledge on a binary opposition between Western and non-Western epistemologies and practice, one should attempt to deal with the intricate interplay and joint appropriation and transformation of different bodies of knowledge'. This is particularly useful when approaching Islamic charity and development, which, as discussed, may originate in different 'discursive traditions' but constantly interface.

#### *Legitimacy and neo-institutional theory*

In this thesis, I explore the interface between different discourses and practices of aid, related to what can be described as Islamic tradition of aid inspired by ideals and practices of Islamic charity on one hand, and the Western-origin tradition of development aid on the other (Juul Petersen, 2016). In order to understand this interface between different traditions of aid and how it influence change in organizations, it is useful to draw on insights from neo-institutional theory. Neo-institutional theory is a theoretical perspective used to understand organizational behaviour which emphasizes the 'socially constructed normative worlds in which organizations exist and how the social rules, standards of appropriateness, and models of legitimacy will constitute the organization' (Orru, Biggart, & Hamilton, 1991, p. 361). Drawing on neo-institutional theory, scholars studying NGOs have shed light on how organizational legitimacy is socially constructed, viewing it not as a technical issue focusing on accountability, efficiency, and representativeness, but as a multifaceted and relational concept which changes with time and place and thus must be understood in context (Lister, 2003). Neo-institutional theorists assert that the legitimacy of an organization depends on its

conformity, or resonance, with the discourses dominant among its stakeholders, both internal and external to an organization (Meyer & Scott, 1983). Three broad dimensions of legitimacy are commonly distinguished in the neo-institutional literature: normative, pragmatic, and cognitive (Brinkerhoff, 2005; Ossewaarde et al., 2008; Suchman, 1995). These are useful in the study of how organizations make claims to legitimacy. They reveal how legitimacy changes with context, draws attention to the contextual and relational nature of legitimacy, and the significance of normative environments – religious and ideological – in the construction of legitimacy.

#### **4.2. A transnational perspective**

In exploring the relationship between Islamic charity and development engagements among actors in Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo, I adopt a transnational perspective. That starts from the assumption of circulation and linkages: ‘migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live’ (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 3). In order to do so it is necessary to adopt ‘a transnational social field approach to the study of social life that distinguishes between the existence of transnational social networks and the consciousness of being embedded in them’ (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 6). A transnational perspective gives attention to the transnational dimensions of Islamic charity among migrants, and among those who have not migrated.

While religion can be seen as an unbounded phenomenon travelling across sites, it is naturally embodied and expressed in concrete places, ideals and practices. A transnational perspective allows one to see the circulation of Islamic charity – including money, but also its ideas and practices<sup>31</sup> – not as fixed and bounded, but as constantly on the move (Levitt, 2013).

#### *Transnational social fields*

In this thesis, I combine a number of units operating at different, but intersecting scales: individual actors and actors’ collectives, the formally and informally organized; the local, global and the transnational. To analyse Islamic charity as the interaction of these different actors, the discourses they relate to, and practices they engage in from a transnational

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<sup>31</sup> These are sometimes conceptualized as economic and social remittances (Goldring, 2004; Levitt, 1998; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2013).

perspective, I adopt the concept of ‘social field’. The social field is central to social theory, most notably developed by Bourdieu (1990). Here, drawing on Long (2001), as well as Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004), taking a less structuralist understanding of the field than the one advanced by Bourdieu, I understand social fields as *conceptual spaces*. These spaces contain interactions of differing forms between actors. In the words of Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p. 1009): ‘Social fields are multidimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth, and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms organization, institution, and social movement.’ Social fields can be national and transnational. Transnational ones involve shifting the gaze from the national level to see actors as related across national borders, not only at global or international levels, but also at the level of community, family, and individual. As pointed out by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p. 1009), ‘neither the national nor the transnational field automatically takes precedence’. Instead, determining the relative importance of national and transnational social fields becomes an empirical question. As such, adopting a transnational perspective implies seeing the global, the national, and the local as potentially transnationally constituted (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

The social field, taking into account its potential to reach across borders, is a useful conceptual tool in the analysis of the relationship between Islamic charity and development. A transnational social field perspective shifts the focus from conventional units of analysis in macro or national studies of development – such as the state, intergovernmental organizations, and international NGOs – and brings attention to the interconnection of actors engaged in development at different levels and scales. While development studies research has moved from ‘grand theory’ to more empirically grounded understandings of development in particular contexts (Molteberg & Bergstrom, 2000), development practice still chiefly focuses on the role of formal organizations such as NGOs and states. Development, or social change, resulting from smaller-scale interactions and interfaces, whether intentional and unintentional, is often not counted as ‘development’, despite a plethora of research over the last decades on the role of local, grassroots institutions in effecting social change (Molteberg & Bergstrom, 2000). I would argue that this work has not yet been heeded by the development aid community, which, despite its rhetorical commitment to participation, continues to favour studies of formal organizations, often in the form of macro-level aid actors and institutions. Taking a transnational social field perspective permits studying the local, small-scale contributions to development as they are

enacted across sites, and to include a perspective of the less formal organized forms of initiatives, such as those found in the diaspora (Borchgrevink & Erdal, 2017).

*Multi-sited methodologies*

To grasp transnational linkages and dimensions, it is necessary to apply methodologies that enable the study of what happens ‘in-between sites’, in transnational social fields (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Multi-sited methods have become common for social science studies concerning the movement of people, things, and ideas (Sorge & Roddick, 2012). Multi-sited methods are moving away from methodological nationalism and the idea of the bounded site. This can be taken as a sign of an epistemological shift, challenging the emphasis on Geertzian ‘thick description’ and the emphasis on ‘depth’ characterizing classical ethnographic research (Hovland, 2009). Transnational political, economic, and cultural forces shape local contexts both ‘here’ and ‘there’, and global processes of transformation are ‘grounded in cultural constructions that are associated with particular localities’ (Fog Olwig & Hastrup, 1997). This makes the field both ‘here’ and ‘there’, but also ‘in-between’, as sites are continuously connected. In contrast to the traditional bounded field of ethnographic studies, in studies of transnational phenomena, it has been noted how the field is a not geographical place, but a conceptual space whose boundaries are negotiated and constructed again and again (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997 cited in Horst, 2009, p. 122). Multi-sited methods have been identified as particularly useful when studying movements and networks (Horst, 2009, p. 122), which I discuss further in the methods section to follow.

## 5. Context of the study

Although I have stressed that context is essential to an actor-orientated analysis, the article format adopted in this thesis allows for limited contextual detail in the articles themselves. In the following section, I therefore present the context of the present study. Highlighting issues of particular relevance, I first provide some background for my choice of geographical focus and the migration context. I then turn to issues of religion, gender and development, both in Pakistan and in Norway, that are of particular relevance to the topics explored in this thesis. This is followed by descriptions of the two religio-political movements the main cases of my study are closely linked to: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI).

### 5.1. Research sites and choice of cases

Although the greater context of this research is Pakistan and Norway, the fieldwork was carried out in the province of Punjab (Pakistan), in Oslo (Norway), and in London (UK). As a Muslim-majority country with strong, diverse traditions of Islamic charity, Pakistan is a pertinent site for this study. In Pakistan, Punjab naturally emerged as a geographical focus, because the transnational religious networks I traced predominantly spanned sites in Oslo and Punjab. Following transnational connections beyond these two sites also brought me to London, where I did two interviews.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Punjab, Pakistan*

Located in Pakistan's central east, Punjab is the most populous province, home to approximately 100 million people.<sup>33</sup> Although it boasts Pakistan's largest economy, Punjab also has great income inequality and high levels of poverty (Azeem, Muger, & Schilizzi, 2016). While agriculture has been the economy's major driver, population growth and internal migration are now increasing the level of urbanization: as much as 60% of the

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<sup>32</sup> Since I have only conducted two interviews in London, I do not include a description of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK. It is, however, worth noting that sites in the UK are pivotal in the transnational social fields across which Islamic charity is practised by actors in Norway and Pakistan. Family and kin, along with other social, economic, political, and religious ties, are strong between actors in Pakistan and the UK, between actors in Norway and the UK, and beyond. Comprising some 1 million people, the UK has the largest Pakistani diaspora globally, with approximately 7 million people (Rogers, 2013). The UK-based diaspora has been the subject of extensive research on integration, identity and belonging – including religion (Werbner, 2013), gender (Shah, S., 2013), and transnational perspectives (Bolognani & Lyon, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Estimates from the Population Welfare Department, Government of Punjab (n.d).

population lives in urban areas.<sup>34</sup> Punjab has been a major provider of transnational migrant workers to Asia, the Gulf States, and Europe (Abdin & Erdal, 2015).

Politically and culturally, Punjab has been an important province during the history of Pakistan (and that of the former British India). It is traditionally the main recruitment ground for the armed forces (Siddiqa, 2007) and, more recently, for religious extremist groups (Siddiqa, 2013). Punjab hosts many of Pakistan's religious and political organizations. The two transnational organizational networks examined in this study have their headquarters in Lahore, the capital city of Punjab province.

### *Oslo, Norway*

The Pakistani diaspora comprises one of the oldest and most established diaspora communities in Norway (Erdal, 2012). Migration from Pakistan to Norway started in the late 1960s, initially mostly from Punjab. In 2013, some 37,000 people of Pakistani origin were living in Norway, the majority of whom settled in and around Oslo (Statistics Norway, 2013).<sup>35</sup> These Pakistani immigrants – together with the Pakistani diaspora that gradually developed – have been described as socio-economically and socio-culturally homogenous (Østberg, 2003). Of particular relevance to this study, however, is the Pakistani migrants' diversity of religious background; they adhere to various Islamic denominations originating on the Indian subcontinent, and some are associated with related religious and political organizations.<sup>36</sup>

Nearly five decades of sustained transnational activity has resulted in strong relations between Oslo and Punjab, including familial, social, economic, political, and religious ties. This makes them pivotal locations in the transnational social field and, I believe, pertinent sites for a study of Islamic charity from a transnational perspective.

### *Practical and personal matters*

Pakistan was as natural a choice as Norway when deciding which countries to include in my study. Through long-term professional engagement in Pakistan, including language studies,

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<sup>34</sup> It is commonly estimated that one third of Pakistan's population lives in urban areas. However, applying a density-based definition – any area with 1,000 people per square mile – would make Pakistan 60–65% urban today, according to Qadeer (2014).

<sup>35</sup> Migration from Pakistan to Norway has predominantly, though not exclusively, been family-chain migration, from a fairly limited area in Northern Punjab (Erdal, 2012). In the early days, 80–90% of migrants came from the districts of Jhelum and Gujrat (Østberg, 2003, p. 3).

<sup>36</sup> The majority is Sunni Muslim (85%), adhering to different schools of Sufi-inspired Islam, but also the Deobandi school of thought, JI and others. Shia accounts for approximately 15%. Minorities also include Ahmadis (Linge, 2016; Vogt, 2008).

work in the development sector and, more recently, in research, I had cultivated cultural and linguistic competencies as well as contacts that would give me a type of access difficult to gain in other contexts. Personal and practical concerns also encouraged the choice of Oslo, which is my hometown and where I live with my family. Doing long-term ethnographic research at another site was not feasible for me, with my young family at the time. But the direct flight between Oslo and Lahore meant that multi-sited fieldwork was not only possible, but also provided, as I would discover, a very interesting and analytically rewarding perspective.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, I had a personal interest: having visited Pakistan regularly since 1995, including stints living and working in the country for several years, I was curious to learn more about the Pakistani diaspora in Norway.

## **5.2. Pakistan**

### *The religious landscape in Pakistan*

Pakistan is a majority Muslim society and a constitutionally declared Islamic republic. The country was created as a separate homeland for the Muslims of the South Asian subcontinent in 1947. Today's population of approximately 96% Muslims is commonly broken down as 85–90% Sunni and 10–15% Shia.<sup>38</sup> Since its creation, there has been little disagreement over Pakistan's status as an Islamic republic, although the role that religion should play in public life and what kind of Islam should be practised, are issues causing deep divides. Islam is a fundamental ingredient to national identity, one that cuts across Pakistan's many other identity lines (ethnicity, cast, class, gender, mobility). Islam is by no means a uniform religion, being expressed in diverse ways among schools of Islamic thought, sectarian affiliations and in terms of religious organization, authority, and practice. The Sunnis are divided into four main sects: Ahl-e-Hadith, Barelvi, Deobandi, and Jamaat-e-Islami. The Shia population in Pakistan belongs mainly to the Twelver branch, following the Jafari school of Islamic law. Pakistan is also home to minorities of non-Muslim people. The main religious minorities are Christians (approximately 2.8 million people, or 1.6% of the population) represented by Protestants and Catholics; Hindus (also 2.8 million), and Sikhs (approximately 70,000 people). Other religious minorities include Shia Nazeri, Bora Ismaeli and Ahmadiyya. Strong links between religion and politics in Pakistan have long existed, with religious actors taking clear positions in support of, or in opposition to, the government.

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<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of multi-sited methods, see section 6.1.

<sup>38</sup> These are frequently quoted estimates, for example by Central Intelligence Agency (2017); though I believe it is difficult to establish these numbers with any certainty.



### *Islamic reformism*

The two religio-political organizations central to this study are both Islamic reform movements. Islamic reformism in South Asia emerged in the context of the colonial encounter with modernity,<sup>39</sup> and has been a major factor shaping the contemporary socio-cultural context in Pakistan (Khurshid, 2015). Islamic reformism covers a wide range of ideologies and practices, where the revival of Islam, in reaction to the colonial encounter, can be seen as closely tied to the creation of Pakistan (Jamal, 2013). Founded as an Islamic state and a Muslim nation for the Muslims in the South Asian subcontinent in 1947, Islam has become naturalized in the political discourse. In the search for, and competition over ‘the real Islam’, Islam has been a mobilizing and legitimizing discourse among a broad range of actors, including secular modernists, Islamists and traditionalists (Jamal, 2013). Islamic reformism can be seen as an alternative modernizing project to that of the colonial state. As pointed out by Khurshid (2015) in both modernizing projects – the colonial civilization project and the Islamic reform movement – women became central modernizing subjects.

### *Gender and religion in Pakistan*

Religion and ideology influence understandings of what appropriate gender roles are, and regulate relations between men and women. This is also the case in Pakistan, where there are multiple positions on what ideal gender roles are and how these should be advanced. Over the years, the Pakistan government has proven to be attentive to gender perspectives in national law and policy.<sup>40</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s, under the government of Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, progressive views of women were advanced, opening the space for women’s participation in the public sphere. Further policies were introduced to advance the position of women, first through education, work, and positions in politics (reserved quotas for women were first introduced under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) and later, under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif (Bano, 2009). Under General Pervez Musharraf (ruling from 2001 to 2008), women’s political participation was stimulated through the introduction of quotas. Before the 2002 general elections, 33% of the seats in local-level bodies and 17% of the seats in national-level bodies were reserved for women (Bano, 2009).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> When discussing ‘the modern’ or ‘modernity’ in this study, I do not mean to invoke some essentialized notion that is dichotomous to ‘the traditional’.

<sup>40</sup> Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996, but has been slow to file the national reports to which signees commit (Weiss, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> The 2002 elections are historically significant for JI, particularly its women political activists, who through the introduction of quotas were ‘forced’ into electoral politics. Women in Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) (in

While substantial improvements have been made, a huge gap still remains between policies and realities on the ground. Although the political leadership has been ‘secular’<sup>42</sup> and receptive to Western liberal values and ideas about women’s rights for much of the country’s history since 1947, liberal reforms – particularly regarding women in the development process – have been met with resistance from the religious leadership and the religio-political parties. The Islamization programme promulgated in 1979 by General Muhammed Zia-ul-Haq (ruling from 1977 to 1986) reversed some of the gains made. The Council of Islamic Ideology’s role was invigorated and a conservative cadre of *ulema* (Islamic scholars) was inserted into it. Laws were revised to make them ‘Islamic’, and new legislation was introduced, most notably the Hudood Ordinances penalizing adultery.<sup>43</sup> While laws introduced under Zia-ul-Haq came to be revised, (for example, through the 2006 introduction of the Women’s Protection Bill under President Musharraf), the effects of the Islamization programme are still in evidence in Pakistani society, and reform initiatives always cause contention among diverse political actors.

The Islamization programme sparked the mobilization of a feminist movement in Pakistan, with women’s rights organizations being established largely by graduates from United States universities. This has led critics to claim that the Pakistani women’s movement is a Western secular import (Nyborg, 2002). It should be noted, however, that questions concerning the position of women are not new in Pakistan. Gender roles and relations were also contentious in British India, with gender segregation and women’s seclusion through *purdah* (the institution of female modesty through seclusion from men) being debated among Muslim men and women in the subcontinent from colonial times (see Nyborg, 2002; Rashid, 2008; Weiss, 2014).

Women’s activism in Pakistan is diverse. Apart from liberal feminists advocating women’s rights and gender equality in all spheres of life, there is a range of actors in Pakistan who in different ways work to improve the position of women in Pakistan. While

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English, the United Council for Action), a religious party alliance of which JI was part – won 12 of 60 reserved seats for women (Jamal, 2013, pp. 16–17).

<sup>42</sup>‘Secular’ here means to separate between religion and the state; it does not mean areligious. The term ‘secular’ has gained negative connotations in Pakistan. Some Islamic scholars, Abu Ala Maududi for example, has translated the word as ‘*ladini*’, meaning areligious, thus viewing those supporting secular ideas as Muslim apostates (Iqtidar, 2011)

<sup>43</sup> The Hudood Ordinances replaced parts of British colonial law with Sharia-based law to bring Pakistani law ‘in conformity with the injunction of Islam’ (Rashid, 2008). It made extramarital sex (*zina*), theft and consumption of alcohol criminal offences, punishing them with methods mentioned the Quran and the Hadith including whipping, amputation, and stoning to death. The introduction of the Hudood Ordinances and particularly the Zina Act – which did not distinguish between rape and adultery, and through this made women punishable for being raped – causes great controversy and has been a central issue in the Pakistani women’s movement. Religious groups such as JI have been in support of the law.

there are Islamic feminists who engage in the re-examination of women's rights under Sharia law, they have only limited influence in Pakistan (Weiss, 2014; Kirmani, 2013).<sup>44</sup> However, many actors, including feminists, avoid a secular framework and maintain the importance of understanding women's positions in Pakistan within the cultural historical context (Afzal-Khan, 2007; Shaheed, 2010; Weiss, 2014). There are multiple narratives, interpretations of women's rights and positions on the role of women.

#### *Development, aid, and actors in Pakistan*

Pakistan has considerable developmental challenges. Criticized for having failed to invest in human development (Haq, 1997; Bano, 2009), the Pakistani state does not function as a provider of welfare, basic services, or development for all its citizens. According to the government, approximately 30% of the population lives below the poverty line (Khan, Z.M., 2016), and income inequality is high. Pakistan ranks 147 out of 188 countries on the 2014 Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme, 2014) significantly lower than countries with comparable levels of per capita income.

Diverse actors are engaged in development including the government of Pakistan, the private sector, and heterogeneous civil society actors. After independence in 1947, the state implemented five-year plans for economic growth and development. With frequent change between democratically elected governments and military rule throughout the country's young history, Pakistan has been marked by political instability and competition between different elite groups. As noted by Bano (2012, p. 32) 'the concentration of power in the hands of the military, the bureaucracy and the landed elite has resulted in the failure of the legislature to undertake basic institutional reforms that could lay the foundation of a more representative and accountable government.' Pakistan has been a recipient of foreign aid since independence, for both development and military purposes.<sup>45</sup> Although economic growth has been steady for long periods, resources have not been distributed evenly, nor has

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<sup>44</sup>In the context of Pakistan, Islamic feminism has had only limited influence. The women's movement has periodically and strategically engaged with religious discourse and actors – with varying degrees of success (Kirmani, 2013). Pakistani feminists have been divided on this issue, and for some, engaging with Islam was unavoidable as issues about women's rights were being framed in a religious manner by the state itself. (Kirmani, 2013, p. 19). It should also be noted that in Pakistan, the term 'feminism' is commonly understood as being anti-male, and is commonly perceived as being a Western, imported concept. For these reasons many women's rights activists are wary of using the term (Kirmani & Phillips, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> The United States has been a major donor, and aid has come with strong political conditions and ideological attachments (Zaidi, 2011).

the state invested sufficiently in social services, such as health and education.<sup>46</sup> Entering into the structural adjustment and stabilization programmes with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (under Zia ul Haq in 1988) Pakistan adopted policies of economic liberalization and de-nationalization, opening for privatization of welfare and social services. This privatization appealed to ordinary Pakistani citizens as a corrective for what was seen as state failure to provide social services (Hasan & Junjeo, 1999; Bano, 2012). This policy shift opened a space for the non-profit sector to become actors in development in Pakistan, and it contributed to the exponential growth in NGOs in Pakistan during the following decade, from a few hundred in the 1970s to approximately 25,000 to 30,000 NGOs by the end of the 1990s (Hasan & Junjeo, 1999, pp. 26–27). The relationship between NGOs and government varies. Some NGOs avoid government collaboration, while others are engaged in different forms of public–private partnerships (through large social sector programmes, or through collaboration with government line departments). Government relations with NGOs have been inconsistent; after the 1980s, NGOs have increasingly been included in major social development programmes, while NGOs’ activities are frequently scrutinized by state agencies (Pasha, Iqbal, & Mumtaz, 2002).

Pakistan has a long history of social activism, with a variety of volunteer organizations. Bano (2012, p. 46) identifies three distinct types of volunteer organizations which preceded the emergence of development NGOs in the 1980s; these were religious, political, and welfare organizations. Islamic welfare organizations in Pakistan (such as the Al Khidmat Foundation), like Muslim-Brotherhood-associated organizations across the Middle East (see Mandaville, 2007; Clark, 2004), emerged as an alternative to the largely unsuccessful state, and as an alternative to secular nationalism (Juil Petersen, 2011). Privatization strategies later opened up for the growth of the voluntary sector, which gained space for NGOs but also for religio-political welfare organizations (Jamal, 2013). The NGOs, unlike earlier organizational forms, did not mobilize around voluntarism, but rather were established as professional organizations, relying on hired staff and donor funding (Bano, 2012, p. 51). Supported by the influx of foreign aid, the Pakistani NGO sector has steadily grown and diversified.<sup>47</sup> This is reflected in organizational origin, scale and scope of

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<sup>46</sup> According to Bano (2012, p. 32) the Pakistani state has on average invested 1% of GDP on health services and below 2% of GDP on education. In comparison it spends some 4.6% of GDP on the military and 4.8% on debt servicing.

<sup>47</sup> Estimates of NGOs in Pakistan range from 45,000 (ADB, 2009) to 100,000–150,000 organizations (Shah, 2016). In 2015, 357 NGOs were certified by the Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy (Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy, 2015).

activities, and in approaches to aid and development (including short-term charity, welfare services, humanitarian relief, and longer-term efforts aiming for social change).

Tracing the history of the voluntary sector in Pakistan, a report from the Aga Khan Development Network notes how Islam provides ‘a near universal context for giving’ (2000, p. 67). Religion, particularly Islam but also Christianity (with missionary-run schools and hospitals), has been a major influence in welfare activities, and in the provision of social security and basic services in health and education among public and private actors (Ghaus-Pasha & Iqbal, 2003). Without a welfare state to provide basic services to all its citizens, many of the poor in Pakistan rely on private charity for a daily meal, access to basic welfare services in education and health, or to obtain interest free micro-finance.

Religious shrines – known to receive large monetary donations from visitors – were placed under government control in 1959 (Malik, 1990), and the government nationalized zakat collection from 1980 to 2010, deducting zakat from private saving accounts. This was a hugely unpopular policy, making people withdrawing their savings before the date of deduction (Candland, 2000; Kirmani and Zaidi).<sup>48</sup> The practice of direct deduction was discontinued in 2010 (with the 18th amendment of the constitution), and people can now decide themselves where to give. Notwithstanding the unpopular nationalization of zakat, in Pakistan, religiously prescribed charitable practices like zakat and sadqa are recognized as important for providing relief to the suffering, covering basic needs and giving access to social services to the poor by many actors in government and civil society. The government still collects (voluntary) zakat and distributes it to the ‘deserving poor and needy’ through the Bait-ul Maal Pakistan<sup>49</sup> and operates a decentralized system with zakat and *ushr* (a levy on agricultural land) committees established at provincial, district, and local levels, focusing mainly on financial aid, orphan-support programmes, and education.<sup>50</sup> Private individual donations are however estimated to be far greater than what the government collects, and to provide a social safety network for many poor and vulnerable households (Khan & Arif, 2016).

Just as the NGO sector is diverse, so the religious groups and organizations involved in charity, welfare, relief and development activities in Pakistan are many and varied

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<sup>48</sup> Bano and Nair (2007, p. 28) suggest that the nationalization of zakat and deduction of zakat directly from private accounts might have reduced the money available for people to give to organizations of their own choice.

<sup>49</sup> Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) is an autonomous body set up through a 1991 Act of the Government of Pakistan with the aim of providing support to ‘the poorest of the poor’, among other approaches through direct cash disbursement for people in dire economic need.

<sup>50</sup> See <http://www.zakat.gop.pk> (accessed on 15 December 2016).

(Ghaus-Pasha & Iqbal, 2003; Iqbal & Siddiqui, 2008). The Pakistani cases<sup>51</sup> in this study can be seen as a particular subset of so-called faith-based organizations associated with religio-political organizations.<sup>52</sup> As noted earlier, it can be difficult to distinguish ‘faith-based’ from other organizations in the Pakistani context where, for many, religion permeates all parts of life, also charity and development-related work. Studying the role of faith in the charity and development sector in Pakistan, Kirmani, and Zaidi (2010, p. 59), found when comparing what they term ‘local charities’ (mainly funded by local charity donations) and ‘professional development organizations’ (mainly funded by institutional, often international donors),<sup>53</sup> that there were broad differences in terms of the languages, funding sources, programmatic focus, and relationship with religion. In terms of programmatic priorities, Kirmani and Zaidi (2010, p. 54) found that the local charities mainly focused on ‘welfare’ – which they describe as short-term, often one-off interactions with communities through provision of material assistance and relief, while the professional development organizations in contrast, were focusing on ‘longer-term development’, in that they involved longer-term engagements with communities with the aim of making individuals and communities self-sufficient through training, income generation, and community mobilization. It is evident however, from the cases presented by Kirmani and Zaidi (2010), that these distinctions are not clear-cut, because many of the organizations – both those identified as ‘faith-based’ and those that were not – were engaged in activities aiming for immediate relief of suffering (caused by poverty or humanitarian emergencies), and also in activities aiming to contribute to self-sufficiency and longer-term societal development.

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<sup>51</sup> The religio-political organizations are part of a diverse set of religious actors and organizations involved in charity, welfare, and development on a regular and ad-hoc basis, which in varying degrees have associations with particular religious scholars and organizations (e.g. Dawat-e-Islami) or political groups (such as Falahi Insaniyat Foundation, associated with the banned militant organization Jamaat-ud-Dawa).

<sup>52</sup> Faith-based organizations can be typologized in many ways, for different purposes. Clarke (2008) suggests five types of faith-based organizations of relevance for international development: representative organizations or apex bodies; charitable or welfare organizations; socio-political organizations; missionary organizations; and radical, illegal, or terrorist organizations. Associated with religio-political movements, and being engaged in charity and development work, closely integrated with religious practice, spreading and teaching Islam, the organizations in this study span several of these categories.

<sup>53</sup> Recognizing the difficulties in distinguishing faith-based from other organizations in Pakistan, Kirmani and Zaidi included in their study organizations that ‘respondents familiar with the NGO sector in Karachi themselves identified as being affiliated with a religious tradition or as “faith-based” ’ (Kirmani and Zaidi, 2010, p. 25). In their study they found that five out of the six ‘faith-based organizations’ surveyed were mainly funded by local donations. The exception was Caritas (Pakistan), which was funded by Caritas International. This indicates that rather than distinguishing between ‘faith-based’ and ‘non-faith based’ organizations, in the Pakistani context it might be more useful to distinguish between organizations that are funded by local donations, often from individuals, and organizations that are mainly funded by institutional, often international, donors.

### 5.3. The Pakistani diaspora in Oslo, Norway

#### *Religion in the context of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway*

As a result of migration, Islam has become Norway's second-most-common religion after Christianity.<sup>54</sup> Muslim congregations count some 141,000 members (Statistics Norway, 2015b). The Muslim population in Norway is roughly divided between 85% Sunnis and 15% Shia (Linge, 2016). The majority of Pakistani migrants and their descendants in Norway are Sunni and many are members of mosques that are linked to particular schools of thought and centres of learning in Pakistan. The first mosques in Norway were established in the 1970s. The Pakistani Muslim community has since invested considerable time and money on their places of worship; these range from rented premises to big, purpose-built mosques. This can be seen as a manifestation of the formal side of organized religious life among Muslims in Oslo. Yet, many of the religious practices imported into Norway by Muslim migrants do not require particular physical structures. Muslims come together to pray, learn about religion, and to celebrate religious festivals. Women frequently meet for religious lectures or lessons (*dars*). These gatherings commonly take place in private homes, involving religious lecturing, praying and often a shared meal. Both religious and social, the get-togethers also frequently provide a venue for giving to charity and are linked to social engagement and development activities outside Norway, in Pakistan and elsewhere (see articles 1 and 2).

#### *Gender ideals and practice in Norway and the Pakistani diaspora*

With reference to the discussion above (on gender ideologies in section 3.3), the Norwegian state can be seen as promoting a gender ideology based on sameness, granting equal rights to men and women and promoting, to a large degree, the interchangeability of women's and men's roles in the home and society (Predelli, 2004). Norway has been described as 'a world champion' in gender equality (Selbervik & Østebø, 2013). Yet, in practice, labour division between men and women is still gendered, with the latter doing more domestic work, being more frequently employed part-time and receiving lower salaries for equal work (Statistics Norway, 2016). While the gender ideology based on sameness is promoted in official discourse and policy, gender ideologies based on difference and complementarity also exist, not only among migrants but also among conservative Christians (Aune, 2008; Nyhagen & Halsaa, 2016).

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<sup>54</sup> Norway is a secular state, with a Protestant Lutheran 'people's church'. Of the population, 72% are members of the Church of Norway (Statistics Norway, 2015a).

Norway is considered one of the most gender-equal countries in the world,<sup>55</sup> and has worked as a champion for gender equality and women's rights in international arenas. Having introduced its first policy on women and aid in 1985, Norway has since ensured that gender and development has become an integral part of official development strategies and a requirement for development partnership (Selbervik & Østebø, 2013).

In contrast to the gender ideologies based on sameness, that are advanced by the Norwegian state, religious leaders in Oslo's mosques advance religiously based gender ideologies that are defined by difference and complementarity. These are gender-traditional ideologies which award women and men different roles, rights, and responsibilities (Burke, 2012). The women's roles are domestic and centred on taking care of the family; the men's roles are public, in taking responsibility for the family's income.

Gender norms and practices among the Pakistani migrants in Norway are shaped by both their settlement country and their country of origin. In her study of gender views and practices among Muslim women in Oslo, Predelli (2004) found that women use Islam as a flexible resource for interpreting gender relations, in the family and in working life, and that they often challenge the patriarchal gender ideologies advanced by religious scholars. While many migrant women hold gender roles based on complementarity as their ideal, women's practices reveal a more complex picture, where gender norms are challenged by women's participation in the labour market and by men's involvement in domestic work (Predelli, 2004).

#### *Development engagement in the Pakistani diaspora*

The Pakistani diaspora in Oslo are linked to Pakistan through transnational ties that includes remittance-sending to family members, relatives, and others in communities of origin (Erdal, 2012), as well as more organized diaspora-development efforts (Erdal, 2015; Erdal & Borchgrevink, 2015), thus spanning social and familial, economic and political, as well as religious fields of interaction.<sup>56</sup> Patterns of remittances-sending have changed since the early

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<sup>55</sup> The Human Development Report 2015 of the United Nations Development Programme (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>). (accessed 16 June 2016)

<sup>56</sup> Remittances, understood as the 'private transfers of money between individuals', form an important connection between migrants and their relatives in the country of origin (Horst, Erdal, Carling, & Afeef, 2014). Studying remittances from Pakistani migrants in Norway, Erdal (2012) found that remittances include intra-family transfers, personal business investments, development engagements and religious offerings, and that financial transaction may involve several of the above categories and be intended for several recipients. As migrants' remittances are private transfers, it is near to impossible to get an accurate estimate of the amount of money being transferred. Trends, however, based on official statistics indicate that remittances from Norway to Pakistan are steadily increasing (Erdal, 2017).



decades of Pakistani migration to Norway. While there are still migrants sending remittances for the upkeep of their own family, Erdal (2012) found that a substantial proportion of remittance seems to go to individuals, families, and collectives in Pakistan which stretch beyond the household. Transnational ties with Pakistan are also sustained through engagement in development. Development initiatives are often linked with specific places of origin (such as in Pakistani Punjab), or to movements (such as MQI or the Al Khidmat network of organizations), or to areas of Pakistan affected by earthquake, flood, or other disasters (Erdal, 2017).

After Pakistan's 2005 earthquake and a massive flood in 2010, the Pakistani diaspora mobilized to help victims. This mobilization caught the attention of the Norwegian press. Consistent with a broader global trend of mobilizing diasporas to promote development in countries of origin, Norwegian politicians supported these initiatives through, for example, the Pakistan Pilot Project (see Erdal & Horst, 2010). Thus, the Pakistani diaspora in Norway includes organized diaspora development initiatives funded by the Norwegian government and those that are not, plus a range of more informal network and groups that engage in efforts to help the needy in Pakistan and elsewhere.

#### **5.4. The transnational religious networks**

I now turn to the two Pakistani religio-political movements, describing the movements and how they are distinct from each other and other actors. I must underscore that these movements present particular types of religio-political ideology and activism. They should be understood as two specific expressions of Islam – among myriad interpretations of Islam and ways of living a Muslim life – which exist side by side in Pakistan and within the diasporic communities that the networks reach.

Both transnational religious networks that I have selected are reformist, part of the religious revival. The movements represent two different schools of Islam: 'Jamaat-e-Islami' (JI), which means 'party of Islam', is the progenitor of all Islamist parties in Pakistan; 'Minhaj-ul-Quran International' (MQI), which means 'the method of the Quran', has its origins in the Barelvi Sufi (mystic) tradition, though is a reformist movement, also described as neo-Sufi (Philippon, 2006, 2012). Both organizations share beliefs – including, most significantly, a totalizing religious worldview where there is no separation between the religious and the secular; the importance of individual piety and social activism in building a moral society; and gender ideologies based on complementarity between the men and women.

*Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)*

Founded in 1941 with the aim of ‘establishing a state on the injunction of Sharia’, JI was Pakistan’s first Islamist political party (Bano, 2012, p. 88). Breaking away from traditional religious structures, it placed itself above any of the established schools of Islamic thought in Pakistan. It is guided by the writings of Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979), one of the movement’s founders and main ideologues, who is also one of the most prominent modern Islamic thinkers, influential far beyond Pakistan.<sup>57</sup>

Maududi’s ideology – serving to present a vision of a modern Islamic state – developed in reaction to both the *ulema* (the traditionalist Pakistani clergy) and to the modern colonial state. In the words of Nasr (1996, p. 53), a leading scholar on the JI, ‘the modernists wanted to modernize Islam whereas Maududi wanted to also Islamize modernity’. Maududi thus opposed the *ulema* while taking an active anti-imperialist, anti-Western stance (Jamal, 2013; Nasr, 1996). Maududi was a proponent of *ijtihad* (the tradition of independent reasoning and interpretation) and argued that Islam should be interpreted to fit ‘the minds and psychology of boys and girls of this age’ (Maududi, 1991[1978] in Ahmad, 2007, p. 156). He opposed the role exclusively played by the *ulema* in interpreting the Quran, arguing that Muslims needed only the Quran to understand Islam.<sup>58</sup> The writings of Maududi and the JI’s organizational model projected a ‘rationalized, logical Islam compatible with modern lifestyles’ (Iqtidar, 2011, p. 53). Maududi played down the importance of spirituality and miracles and rejected what he considered traditional practices, such as the veneration of saints (Jamal, 2013), very popular in Pakistan. This caused tension with the *ulema*, particularly among the Sufi-orientated groups who criticized Maududi for ‘stripping Islam of spirituality’ (Iqtidar, 2011).

The JI has had a rocky relationship with the Pakistani government through the years; it was in opposition to and suppressed by the government during the 1960s and 1970s, and was co-opted by the Zia-ul-Haq military regime in the 1980s. While initially opposed to traditional constitutional politics, the party was active in elections in the 1990s. It held office through the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) religio-political alliance<sup>59</sup> from 2002 until 2007, and later formed part of the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Amin, 2014). Despite limited electoral success, the JI remains one of Pakistan’s most influential religio-political movements. Although the party earlier has been linked with militant groups

<sup>57</sup> Maududi’s writings have been influential in the development of Islamism worldwide. Among others, Syed Qutub, a main ideologue of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, was inspired by Maududi (Black, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Maududi’s widely read commentary on the Quran is available at <http://www.tafheem.net/tafheem.html>.

<sup>59</sup> The MMA was established before the 2002 general elections.

(Haqqani, 2010), today it can be seen as part of the mainstream, religious opposition (Amin, 2014). JI did not set out to become a mass movement, but rather to evoke change through an educated elite: the ‘vanguard of the Islamic revolution’ (Nasr, 1994, p. xiv). Maududi built JI on the model of the Leninist party with strict hierarchical tiers. Unlike many religious organizations in Pakistan, JI is a membership organization with an elected leadership.<sup>60</sup> Becoming a full member, however, is demanding, a process that requires major commitment from aspirants; it entails acquiring a certain knowledge of Islam and pursuing voluntary work, including welfare and development (Bano, 2012). As pointed out by Iqtidar (2013), the strategy of JI seems to have evolved from primarily concentrating on gaining access to the state, to also focusing on the market in order to foster the ideal Muslim community.

#### *Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI)*

The MQI is a transnational religious movement that was founded in 1981 by Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri in Jhang, Pakistan.<sup>61</sup> Established as a reaction to the ‘social, cultural, ideological, moral, spiritual, economical, legal and political decline of Muslim Umma in particular and the whole mankind in general’, the MQI sets out to revive ‘the true values and principles of Islam ... Love, peace, harmony, universal brotherhood, justice, equity and prosperity’ (MQI, 2016).

A self-described ‘revolutionary movement of revivalism’, the MQI is part of the Islamic revival in Pakistan. It is a membership organization,<sup>62</sup> based on a model similar to that of the JI, with hierarchical tiers from the organization’s headquarters down to the street level in several mainly urban areas in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab. It claims to have branches spanning more than 90 countries, predominantly among Pakistani migrants, mainly in the UK, as well as in other European countries, and in the Gulf States.

The MQI is similar to Pakistan’s other Islamist networks, including the JI, in its organizational form and activities, focusing on education, *dawa* (calling or inviting people to Islam) and welfare. The main difference is its Sufi roots, from which an emphasis on spiritual practice is drawn. Spiritual music is performed at gatherings and made available

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<sup>60</sup> Recent membership numbers have been hard to obtain. According to Bano (2012), 2.2 million members were registered in 1997.

<sup>61</sup> Diverging from classical Sufi traditions where the *phir* (spiritual leader) takes *bai’at* (oath of allegiance) from disciples, the MQI is a membership-based organization. To become a member, one completes a form and pays a minimal fee. Theologian and jurist Tahir-ul-Qadri is the leader of this transnational religious organization and political party; he is also seen as *Wali Allah*, meaning ‘friend of God’ – thus an intermediary. The MQI is considered as protected by the Qadri Sufi lineage and active member becomes disciples of the Qadri *tariqa* (Sufi brotherhood) (Philippon, 2006).

<sup>62</sup> According to the MQI, it had 2.8 million registered members worldwide in 2015 (MQI, 2015).

through the organization's website. The MQI considers the concept of *tawassuf* (intermediation) legitimate, an issue of contention between Islamic schools of thought and related groups in Pakistan. Similar to other Islamists, including the JI, Tahir-ul-Qadri sees Islam as a comprehensive system incorporating both individuals' conduct and the basis for a political order, an Islamic state.

The MQI promotes Islamic reform from a grassroots level. Yet, unlike the JI, it does not define itself in contradistinction to a 'Western', liberal-political doctrine on democracy and human rights. Similar to the JI, Tahir-ul-Qadri is a proponent of *ijtihad*, which is highly disputed within Sunni Islam and can be seen as characteristic of Islamist interpretations. Unlike the JI, however, the MQI finds no contradiction between an Islamic state and the modern nation-state. Tahir-ul-Qadri maintains that there is a common set of institutions and values shared in the two traditions; he argues that pluralism, human rights, equality and social justice were all present in the *Nizam-e-Mustafa*, the political system modelled on the community of the Prophet Muhammad (Philippon, 2006). The MQI brands itself as a peaceful alternative in the Islamic revival, promoting Islam as a religion of 'love, peace and knowledge', explicitly emphasizing the compatibility between Islam and human rights.

Tahir-ul-Qadri is one of few religious leaders in Pakistan to have taken a public stance against the use of violence and terror.<sup>63</sup> He entered the political scene in 1989 upon establishment of the Pakistan Awami Tehreek party. After retreating from politics in 2004 when he resigned from the National Assembly, Tahir-ul-Qadri joined the political opposition in 2012. On 'the long march towards Islamabad', he called to boycott elections and later dismissed them as fraudulent, culminating in calling for a 'Green [Islamic] Revolution' and leading a sit-in before the Pakistani parliament in August 2014 – a protest that lasted for several months.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Tahir-ul-Qadri openly positioned himself against Osama bin Laden and issued a 600-page fatwa against terrorism. In doing so, he placed himself in a precarious position vis-à-vis more hard-line groups, such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

<sup>64</sup> The 'Green Revolution' took place during my fieldwork, which was from 2012 to 2015.

## **6. Research design and methods: studying Islamic charity**

This section presents the research design for this study and details the methods I have used. It includes descriptions of the process as well as reflections on data quality and robustness, reflexivity, ethics, and positionality. Research design is often presented as a linear process. It starts with the research problem and then moves on in a linear fashion to research questions, theory, methodologies, and methods for data collection. Analysis and discussion of the research outcome follow, before the final conclusion is drawn. While these are all central components of research, the process itself is rarely linear. Recognizing this, I opted for an open and flexible research design (Maxwell, 2012), which allowed me to adjust the focus of my study during the research process. As is common in qualitative research, the research process for this study has been iterative, moving back and forth between the desk and the field, between the empirical data and the literature.

The nature of the research questions is best suited to the use of qualitative research methods. I set out to explore people's ideas and actions through the reflections, experiences, and practices of the research participants. As such, qualitative methods are appropriate because I want to understand 'the lived experiences and to reflect and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds and realities' (Limb & Dwyer, 2001, p. 6).

Potential transnational dimensions of Islamic charity and diaspora development engagements have been a central aspect of this study, and have influenced my choice of methods. I have been attentive to transnational aspects, first and foremost in the way that the project is designed. One of my research questions focuses directly on the diaspora and transnational dimension. This has made a transnational methodology necessary (section 4.2) and, as a consequence, the adoption of multi-sited methods. In the words of Falzon (2009, pp. 1–2), multi-sited methods involve 'people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous)'. To fully capture the transnational aspects of Islamic charity, I have actively traced interpersonal and institutional, formal and informal connections between people from one site to another, between Oslo, Punjab, and London. A stepwise approach has been useful for this project in that it has produced some cases of matched sample – that is, 'where the unit of analysis is constituted of networks of people who are connected across national boundaries' (Mazzucato, 2008, p. 72) – which allows for following and exploring concrete transnational flows and exchanges between actors 'here' and 'there'. Moving between sites in a stepwise manner has been called 'a virtuous spiral' (Riccio, 2012, p. 80), in which each new turn

gathers momentum from the previous one. This can, as Horst (2009) acknowledges, offer practical and intellectual benefits. A stepwise approach was helpful, for instance, in recruiting research participants. Moreover, it allowed me to do additional and follow-up interviews with some central actors in Norway and Pakistan, further probing into themes when they emerged as significant.

To gain insights into how Islamic charity is gendered, I have explored different dimensions. First, because the two religious movements from which I have drawn my case studies are known to practise gender segregation (Jamal, 2013; Philippon, 2014), I included a specific research question on gender (Research Question 2). Second, I paid particular attention to gender in the analysis, with a view to how it interacts with other ‘variables’ such as location, age, association with religious organization, class and socioeconomic position.

## **6.1. Methods**

Research methods are the research instruments used by researchers to elicit data, which is collected and coproduced in engaging research participants. I used a combination of qualitative research methods to find meaning in the ambiguity that arises from discrepancies between discourses (what people say) and practices (what they do). The methods include semi-structured and unstructured interviews, observation, and collection of texts such as brochures, statistics, and reports published by organizations, governments, and the media.

### *Defining the field*

Unlike conventional ethnography where the field is defined as a bounded site, multi-sited method sites are actually constructed by the research, through the tracing of people, things, metaphors, plots, life-stories, or conflicts (Marcus, 1995, p. 106). My field is not defined by fixed boundaries, but rather is based on tracking flows of people, resources, and ideas associated with Islamic charity across transnational social fields.

My three-location fieldwork was carried out from November 2012 to September 2015. In Oslo, it took place from January 2013 to June 2015; in Punjab, on five trips, each lasting 7 to 10 days, between November 2012 and September 2015; and in London, in August 2013. Taking an exploratory approach, I started in autumn 2012 by taking inventory of Islamic charities among the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo. First, I met with representatives of the Norwegian capital’s four most established Pakistani mosques, all of which have

connections to Pakistan.<sup>65</sup> I began identifying different charity activities, organized in formal and informal ways, linked to these mosques. In November 2012, I also did an exploratory field trip to Pakistan, establishing contacts and planning for later fieldwork there.

After the initial mapping in Norway and Pakistan, I selected two transnational religious networks as my main cases: JI-related organizations and networks (including the Islamic Cultural Centre [ICC]<sup>66</sup> in Oslo, the Al Khidmat Foundation and Al Khidmat Women Trust in Lahore) and MQI organizations (including the Minhaj Welfare Foundation [MWF] with headquarter in Lahore and branches in Oslo and London).

I was introduced to the two networks in Pakistan through my contacts in Norway and contacts I had made in Pakistan earlier. MQI Norway introduced me to MWF in Lahore and in London. Contacts I had developed through earlier engagements in Pakistan at the Institute of Policy Studies, a JI-associated research institute in Islamabad, introduced me to the JI-associated organizations. My contacts at the Institute of Policy Studies led me to the Al Khidmat Foundation and the Al Khidmat Women Trust, as well as to the people dealing with Islamic charity at the ICC in Oslo. From these formal introductions I was given access to other people in the organizations and their networks.

In addition, as part of the broader project under which this thesis falls,<sup>67</sup> my colleague, Marta Bivand Erdal, accessed informants in Oslo through networks associated with the multi-ethnic NGO Rahma Islamic Relief and the umbrella organization known as the Pakistan Development Network, which includes a range of organizations and looser networks engaged in development work in regions of origin. These four networks served as recruitment arenas for informants in Oslo.

The four recruitment arenas in Oslo provided a rich diversity of organizational associations, about half of which were mosque-based and half NGO-based. This enabled exploration of the role of faith also in organizations that are less explicitly religious as well as in networks that do not constitute formal organizations. The two religious networks (as discussed in section 5.4) represent two different sectarian strands within Sunni Islam in Pakistan. The two networks also represent two different modes of organization, with MQI being a formal transnational religious organization and the JI network representing a less formal organizational mode.

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<sup>65</sup> These are the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC), MQI Norway, World Islamic Mission, and the Central Jamaat-e Ahl-e-Sunnat representing three different schools of Islamic thought among the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo.

<sup>66</sup> It should be noted that the ICC in Oslo is an independent mosque, with no formal association with JI.

<sup>67</sup> The PhD falls under the research project known as Private Islamic Charity and Approaches to Poverty Reduction, which was funded by the Norwegian Research Council from 2011 to 2015.

*Sampling: research participants*

The research participants in this study were predominantly of Pakistani origin (migrants and descendants of migrants who were born in Norway, although some informants with other backgrounds were included in Oslo). The groups were otherwise heterogeneous in terms of age, ethnicity, socioeconomic position, and marital status. To recruit research participants, I used targeted sampling, recruiting individuals associated with particular organizations, and snowball sampling, asking interviewees to refer me to potential participants ‘with the same characteristics’ from research participants within the same network (Gobo, 2004). Keeping in mind potential selection biases, I was conscious of the need for variety in age, gender, and ethnicity – not with the aim of obtaining representativeness, but to capture diversity among the research participants (for an overview of participants, see Table 1 below).

Ease of accessing research participants differed across sites. Recruiting in Pakistan was relatively easy; nobody refused to meet with me. In Norway, recruitment took longer; some people did not respond to my requests, but I gradually gained access through snowball sampling. In the UK, it was very difficult to access informants; the two research participants I did reach were reluctant to follow up. I understand my varying experiences as being related to how the research topic might be understood in different contexts (for instance, Islamic charity being linked to terrorism financing), to prevailing norms for social interaction (which in broad terms can be seen as less formal in Pakistan than in Norway and the UK), as well as to the networks I had available in each place and the time I had to develop them.

*Semi-structured interviews*

The main data consists of 92 semi-structured interviews. In Oslo, I did 24 individual interviews with people associated with the two mosque environments of MQI Norway and the ICC. My interviews were complemented by those conducted by Erdal, which comprised 20 semi-structured interviews with people recruited through diaspora development organizations that are members of the Pakistan Development Network and Rahma Islamic Relief. We used the same interview theme guide. Articles 1 and 2 (which I co-authored with Erdal) draw on all the interviews done in Oslo. In Punjab, I carried out 30 semi-structured interviews with 45 individuals: 30 women and 15 men associated with various JI organizations and with the MQI.<sup>68</sup> In addition, I completed 16 interviews in Pakistan with relevant actors from other NGOs, from the UN, and from the government of Pakistan.

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<sup>68</sup> The discrepancy between interview and informant numbers relates to some interviews involving more than one interviewee.



Through referrals from research participants in Norway, I also conducted two interviews in London.

**Table 1: Overview of semi-structured interviews and research participants, by location, gender and interviewer**

<b>Recruitment arenas</b>	Oslo	Punjab	London	Total
MQI networks	10	18		28
JI networks	14	12		26
MQI + JI	24	30	2*	56
UN, government, NGOs, academics		16		16
Diaspora organizations + others**	20			
<b>Gender</b>				
Women (MQI + JI)	17	30		47
Men (MQI + JI)	12	15	2	29
Women (UN, government, NGOs + others)		4		
Men (UN, government, NGOs + others)		12		
Women diaspora organizations + others**	9			
Men diaspora organizations + others**	11			
<b>Interviewer</b>				
Author	24	46	2	72
Author's colleague**	20			20
<b>Total interviews</b>	44	46	2	92

\* The associational identity of the research participants in the UK is not given to protect the participants' identities.

\*\* Interviews conducted by Marta Bivand Erdal.

With semi-structured interviews as my main research instrument, I used thematic interview guides (refer to the appendix for details). I developed two guides. The guide for individual interviewees in Oslo focused on personal religious practice, social engagement, volunteerism, and association with politics and transnational ties; the other guide was for interviewees working in paid or unpaid positions for organizations in Oslo, Punjab, and London. The latter included themes regarding organizational visions, activities, and rationales, as well as personal history and relations to government, politics, and transitional ties.

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used for exploring people's reasons for adopting particular behaviours or doing certain activities (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Semi-

structured and open interviews are good tools for obtaining answers that go beyond researchers' preconceptions. An interview guide with predefined topics ensures a consistency across interviews, while still allowing room to explore and probe particular topics. The research participant is also given room to expand on issues of particular interest. Using the interview as the primary research instrument, however, brings up some concrete issues related to data robustness. The interview is highly reflective of both interviewer's and interviewee's perceptions and biases, of the interviewer's skill at interviewing, and of the interviewee's physical and emotional state (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When taking the view that knowledge is constructed in the research process, it is necessary to critically consider the researcher's positionality and bias. This is an issue to which I return.

Norway and Pakistan presented two very different settings for conducting fieldwork. In Pakistan, I very rarely managed the textbook ideal (White, 1992, p. 8) of a private one-to-one interview. Interviews varied in length from about 20 minutes to several hours; in content, they ranged from covering a few concrete topics in the interview guide, to covering all its topics and delving into broader discussions about Islamic charity and development. The number of research participants also varied from one to seven participants in a single interview, often with people coming and going. At first, this was greatly frustrating, but then I came to accept that this was the only way I could do interviews in this particular setting in Pakistan. I knew it would be considered inappropriate for me as a woman, to meet with men behind a closed door; however, I found it was easier to interview men one-to-one (with an open door) than it was to interview women in this manner. On some occasions I suggested meeting some women alone, but soon realized that it caused suspicion. As a consequence, most of my interviews with women in Pakistan took the form of group interviews – which suggests that my resulting data might be more reflective of the group's official discourse than what could have been gathered in a one-to-one interview. In Norway, by contrast, the vast majority of interviews were one-to-one, and lasted about an hour.

In Oslo, the research participants were mainly doing charity and development work on a private, voluntary basis. I met people on their lunch breaks, in their homes after their children were put to bed, at the mosque, and in my office. I asked the research participants to select the venue most suitable for them. In Punjab, most research participants were engaged with their organizations in volunteer or official capacities. I met with them in their offices, at events arranged by the organizations, and in their homes. It was common for many of my informants to be not only active in religious groups and organizations, but also to be active members of society. They led busy lives filled with work, family commitments, and many

activities. The participants in this research clearly had many other identities apart from 'being Muslim' (Dessing, 2014, p. 39), which is relevant to the analysis of these actors' subject-positions in particular contexts.

#### *Reflections on selection bias*

I am aware that relying on recruiting informants from particular religious arenas (in Norway, Pakistan, and the UK) and from migrant communities (in Norway and the UK) affects the data. I also realize that recruiting research participants through networks of people associated with particular mosques in Oslo and particular religio-political organizations in Pakistan means that the data has a bias towards practising Muslims. The data reflects the ideas and practices of actors describing themselves as practising Muslims, who place emphasis on the importance of religion in their daily lives, and who often have voluntary or paid assignments in the mosques or religious organizations. Acknowledging this bias, the study does not aim to generalize to all Muslims in the Pakistani diaspora in Norway or to scope all 'Muslim NGOs' in Pakistan. Rather, it can be seen 'to privilege research on individuals that are in various ways visible or committed Muslims, and [it] leaves out those who do not attend the meetings of these groups' (Dessing, 2014, p. 40). Likewise, when using migrant organizations and networks as points of entry to research transnational religious practices, one may obtain a biased understanding of the degrees of transnational activity and religious engagement within the migrant group as a whole.

#### *Other methods*

The semi-structured interviews were complemented by other sources of data: more informal interviews, direct observations, and participant observation while visiting organizations' offices and project sites. Written materials including brochures, statistics, and reports from organizations, the governments of Pakistan and Norway, as well as printed and online media were also used in this study. Social media has been particularly important in making it possible for me to follow the engagements of organizations and individuals in real time. I have followed the development of the organizations, tracking their activities on social media, such as their appeals after emergencies in Pakistan, Syria, and Myanmar, and the annual campaigns before Ramadan and Eid. In addition, as part of the broader project under which this thesis falls, we conducted a focus group with participants from diaspora development organizations in Oslo in 2012. The purpose of the focus group was to inform participants about the project, to explore various perspectives on the topic in the research design, and to

solicit feedback on the relevance of topics to pursue in the study. After initial analysis, we also arranged a dinner seminar in December 2014, open to the public, where we invited a range of actors predominantly from the Pakistani diaspora, but also academics with relevant expertise. This session was used to share initial findings and solicit feedback from the audience.

### *Observation*

Through interviews, one can explore human beliefs and meanings. But interviews alone cannot access what people actually do. An interview only offers insight into what people think they do and how they themselves (re)present what they do. To answer my research questions (in particular Research Question 1 concerning practices), I complemented interviews with participant observation at public events, and with direct observation during visits to project sites (including community project offices, health clinics, and schools).<sup>69</sup> I recorded my observations in field notes, sometimes as audio recordings and sometimes as quick notes written up afterwards.

Observation is an effective way of obtaining insights into practices that actors take for granted, or which may be difficult to talk about (Haugen, 2013). Observational methods are not any less affected by problems of interpretation and bias than other methods (Arksey & Knight, 1999), and reflecting on positionality is also essential in direct or participant observation.

## **6.2. Data quality and robustness**

Validity and reliability are crucial research quality concerns. These terms come from the quantitative tradition. In qualitative research, it makes more sense to talk about data robustness (Haugen, 2013). Trying to strike a balance between what was practically achievable and what would give me the best-suited data to answer my research questions, I opted for a flexible research design, a rigorous and reflexive approach to data production, and a combination of various types of qualitative data. I believe this enhanced the robustness of my data.

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<sup>69</sup> This study does not aim to assess the quality of activities undertaken, but rather examines how people make sense of their social practice, how they represent what they do and how they reflect upon it. The perspectives of the recipients of Islamic charity are also outside the scope of this study.

### *Authenticity and translation*

A number of authors writing about qualitative research methods emphasize the importance of making audio recordings of interviews to ensure authenticity of the data material (Robson, 2002, p. 171). Initially I was uncertain about the feasibility of using an audio recorder for this study, because it demands both time and resources to properly transcribe and translate large amounts of audio material. More pressingly, I thought it might be inappropriate, considering the sensitive nature of some issues I wanted to address (notably, the financing of religious institutions and political associations). As it turned out, however, in most cases my informants were agreeable to the use of a recorder.

A recorder became particularly valuable as it allowed for freer conversation, and for switching between languages during an interview. I conducted all the interviews alone (without a research assistant) using a combination of Urdu, English, and Norwegian, depending on the context. I used a recorder for most of the semi-structured interviews and transcribed the audio recordings. The only interviews not recorded were those when participants objected to it, or when recording was not feasible in particularly noisy environments. For interviews in Urdu, I relied on a native speaker to transcribe the audio and translate it into English.<sup>70</sup>

The choice to use a translator or an interpreter brings with it the risk of losing some meaning in translation, and is thus discouraged by some scholars (Borchgrevink, 2003; Robson, 2002). Acknowledging this threat to data robustness, I took particular care to discuss these areas of ambiguity with my translators, research participants, Pakistani academics, and other native speakers. More profoundly, translation in research is not so much concerned with the translation of lexical terms, as it is with meaning. Translation is more than a technical exercise; it is also ‘a social relationship involving power, status and the imperfect mediation of cultures’ – which involves the risk of truly being ‘lost in translation’ (Bujra, 2006, p. 172). I will return to these issues when reflecting on issues of power, positionality, representation, and the importance of reflexivity in the research process.

### *Emic and etic terms*

It can be challenging to distinguish between the categories people use when talking about what they do and reflecting on their experiences, versus the analytical categories researchers use in analysing and writing about these experiences. First comes the challenge of creating

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<sup>70</sup> The Pakistani researcher who helped me is a trained anthropologist, who signed an oath of confidentiality as part of our contractual agreement.

enough analytical distance to analyse and describe ‘the field’ (Juul Petersen, 2016, p. 186). Adopting an analytical language that is distinct from the ‘indigenous’ language of the field (in my case, development discourse and practice and the Islamic discursive tradition) is especially tricky in development studies, as development research have been tightly intertwined with development practice. The development sector produces a vast amount of development analysis, using the very language of development and often endeavouring to contribute to development through critiques and recommendations (Bergstrøm & Molteberg, 2000; Sumner & Tribe, 2008). As pointed out by Juul Petersen (2016, p. 186) terms such as ‘development’, ‘NGOs’ and ‘faith-based organizations’ are both analytical categories and part of development discourse and practice. Terms such as ‘development’, ‘gender equality’ and ‘empowerment’ are emic terms within mainstream development; they are part of the vocabulary as buzzwords of the international development sector (Cornwall, 2007b). Although there are many interpretations of these terms among development scholars and practitioners, they are often used with an assumed sense of common understanding; what each term actually means is rarely made explicit. My interviewees from Muslim NGOs also used these terms, though sometimes attaching very different, even conflicting, meanings to them.

There are also challenges related to translating concepts from one cultural, religious, and linguistic sphere to another. For instance, in Urdu, there is no single term for ‘charity’ that conveys all institutions of Islamic charity. The expression ‘Islamic charity’ is used by some informants when they speak English, but Urdu has several more distinct terms to describe the phenomenon. Urdu terms are often derived from religious terminology (in Arabic) or are sometimes associated with a particular ideological vocabulary, such as *kidmat*, meaning ‘service’ in Urdu, a significant concept in JI ideology (Bano, 2012). I have used ‘Islamic charity’ as a broad category, and have retained terms in Urdu when referring directly to specific institutions such as *zakat* or *sadqa* (voluntary alms), which are difficult to translate into English.

### **6.3. Analysis: making sense of data**

To make sense of my data I used what has been described as an abductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2004), combining certain elements from inductive and deductive methods, but placing the emphasis on *understanding* (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). An abductive method takes the empirical material as a starting point, but does not reject theoretical preconceptions (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4).

The relationship between ideals and practices of Islamic charity, on one hand, and development, on the other, is relatively under-researched and can be addressed from numerous conceptual angles. I did not have a single hypothesis that I wanted to test, but I did have some ideas about what I might find. What I already knew, from the literature and from working as a development practitioner and researcher in Pakistan, influenced my research questions. That, in turn, influenced my research design, methodological choices and analysis.

I used what Lee and Fielding (2009) call thematic, or code-based, analysis. I identified themes in the empirical material based on an abductive approach. This analysis technique is based on identifying themes in interview transcripts and field notes. To help manage my data and as an analytical tool, I used NVivo. Because this software facilitates both free and structured coding, I used a combination of the two. I developed the structured codes from my analytical framework and research questions. To this, I added codes that capture emergent themes from the empirical material. Code-based analysis using programs like NVivo makes the use of ‘cut and paste’ methods, as used by generations of ethnographic researchers, easier and less time-consuming. As pointed out by Lee and Fielding (2009, p. 539), ‘code and retrieve’ is a ‘synoptic strategy’, meaning that it summarizes, which makes it useful for comparing and contrasting across cases.

Silverman (2011), however, warns against reducing analytical questions to technical issues which can be resolved by good interview techniques, simplistic versions of grounded theory or by using qualitative software like NVivo. While these can be helpful aids in the analysis process, Silverman (2011, p. 453) cautions that ‘they are no substitute for theoretically inspired reasoning’. Using a kaleidoscope as a metaphor for social theory, O’Brien (1993, pp. 10–11), describes how a shifting of the theoretical perspective changes the shape of the world being studied. I find this a good illustration of how the four articles in my thesis reflect different perspectives on the relationship between Islamic charity and development. The analysis process has been iterative, moving between empirical material and theory. Each article has a specific focus, each having emerged through this abductive process. Some have been more inductive, close to the empirical material (article 1); others have been more clearly guided by a research question (article 3), or by a combination of empirical and theoretical insights (articles 2 and 4).

When doing qualitative research – using data from semi-structured interviews, informal conversation and observation (recorded in field notes), making sense of the data starts in the field. It begins as reflections and impressions, with context being essential to the process of analysis. I systematically used notes to myself; Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to

these as ‘analytical memos’. These notes were written or recorded after an interview, when I found a quiet moment to reflect, or while listening to recordings or reading through interview transcripts. They allowed me capture any thoughts I had concerning analysis, methodology, positionality, or ethics.

#### **6.4. Reflexivity: positionality, ethics, and power**

I understand knowledge as being constructed in the meeting between research participant and researcher (Benton & Craib, 2011). Researchers are not neutral observers who discover objective facts; rather, they are interpreters of data existing in a certain frame of reference (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 6). This reflects a common view in interpretive social science, of knowledge as relational (Hastrup, 2004). That, in turn, necessitates reflections on ‘self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process and researchers’ accountability in data collection and interpretations’ (Sultana, 2007, p. 376). Reflexivity is not new to qualitative methods, but rather is integral to it, as witnessed, for example, in ethnographic approaches. However, as emphasized by Mauthner and Doucet (2003, p. 414), ‘reflexivity has not been translated into data analysis practice in terms of the difficulties, practicalities and methods of *doing it*’ [emphasis in original]. With their development of a ‘reflexive methodology’, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p. 273) attempt to extend the approach to the whole research process, identifying four levels of interpretation: (i) interaction with the empirical material (low-level analysis, close to the empirical material), followed by (ii) further interpretations (relating the empirical material to theory and analytical concepts), and (iii) critical interpretation (focusing on ideology, power and social reproduction). Finally comes (iv) reflection on text production and language use (focusing on researchers own text, claims to authority, selectivity of voices represented in the text). The scholars argue that it is the ability to handle this reflexively that matters (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 317). To deal with reflexivity in my research process, I draw on their methodology. The abductive approach allows theory to engage with the empirical material, thus emphasizing the need to critically reflect throughout the research process.

#### *Positionality in the field*

While reflexivity in qualitative research was long concerned with creating ‘scientific objectivity’ (Carling, Erdal, & Ezzati, 2014), reflexivity in interpretive research demands



information about how our positions affect the production of data and analysis. As examples of reflexivity, I share some passages from my notes.

**Field notes from Lahore, September 2014**

Being introduced to a group of Jamaat women in the house of a senior Jamaat activist one afternoon in Lahore, I was asked about the length of my stay in Pakistan. I said, apologetically, that I unfortunately only was in Pakistan for a short visit, as I have small children at home. In response, I heard what sounded like a sigh of relief going through the room. One of the women leaned towards me, took my hand and said: ‘Thank you for telling us, this makes it so much easier to relate to you.’

Being a mother made me more than a foreign researcher. Stories like this bring to the fore how positions matter in the research encounter. While insider and outsider perspectives have been a central theme in ethnographic research, these positions are less clear-cut than they might first appear. Positionality in research has both relational and normative dimensions, which change according to context. As researchers, we can to some extent manage our positionality; we can use certain traits, dispositions, and personal experiences to create rapport and trust, for example, by highlighting shared experiences (for example, motherhood, sisterhood or being development professionals). Other characteristics we cannot easily hide (such as being Caucasian, being female), though this can be moderated, for example, by demonstrating linguistic and cultural competences and familiarity with context and customs. Positionalities are not black and white (Carling et al., 2014) and, as researchers, we constantly manage our fieldwork identities (Cousin, 2010).

**Field notes from Oslo, April 2013**

The room was long and narrow, without any windows. It was dark, hot and stuffy, but the atmosphere was cheerful. Kids running around in fancy frocks, young girls dressed in nice, colourful *shalwar kamiz*, old women draped in shawls. Only a few chairs to sit on, mainly for the older generation. My mum was offered one. I had brought my mother [72 years old] and my daughter [2.5 years old] to a *meena bazaar*, a traditional South Asian charity event arranged by a women’s group in a suburb of Oslo. We were very well received. My daughter wore her favourite ‘princess gown’, a light blue and glittery *kamiz* that I had brought her from Pakistan. She insisted on having *henna* painted on her hand. Sitting quietly on her grandmother’s lap holding her hand out to have it decorated with intricate floral designs, she was sparkly eyed. We, like the other women at the event, were having samosas and cupcakes, spending the Saturday enjoying ourselves.

Attending this event as a three-generation family was a conscious decision, both practical and strategic. It was very practical because I could focus on my research work while my

mother looked after my daughter. But it was also strategic: during visits to similar events in the past, I had felt a bit awkward. My feelings were the result of my being alone (everyone else came in a group of family and friends), being the only person of a different origin (everyone else was of Pakistani origin) and being the only ‘observer’ (everyone else participated in the event). Bringing my mother and daughter reduced the perceived distance between the subjects of my research and me. As a group, we appeared less of a contrast to the other participants. My mother and my daughter were there purely to enjoy the atmosphere and – together as three generations of women – we were maybe easier to relate to. If nothing else, it eased my tensions. I was not only a researcher with the notepad and recorder, but a mother and a daughter, which permitted me to show these other sides of myself.

Positionalities are constructed in the interaction between researchers and research participants and thus change with context. Who we are and how we present ourselves affects how we are perceived by different research participants, which in turn creates different expectations. Doing research on Islamic charity, I was pleased to introduce myself with a business card from a peace research institute,<sup>71</sup> not a war studies department. The title of ‘peace researcher’, I think, enhanced my image as a bridge-builder, someone who could help promulgate a more truthful picture of Islam. This awarded me with a sense of being trustworthy, but also added a layer of responsibility; I needed to be careful not to promise too much, not giving the impression that I would be a spokesperson for any participant’s particular version of Islam. Being granted this position of trust, however, made me especially sensitive to issues of representation, a challenge about which I will say more.

Having worked in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan from 2001 to 2004, I had been an insider to the mainstream development sector in Pakistan. I knew the development jargon and main actors, and had followed the politics of development in Pakistan for many years. An insider’s perspective, however, can also pre-determine what we see and what we are blind to. Already having ‘a foot in the door’ can be useful, but it might also prevent a researcher from seeing what is extraordinary. I believe that, as a former development professional who was exploring the relationship between the familiar field of development and the new field of Islamic charity, I was placed in an advantageous position. Being unfamiliar to a field bestows on a researcher a fresh pair of eyes and the asset of being able to ask ‘stupid questions’. As a Western female researcher among conservative religious

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<sup>71</sup> During my PhD in International and Environment Development Studies (Noragric) at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), I stayed employed at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

organizations in Pakistan, I was clearly an outsider. I was there to learn. However, having a working knowledge of Urdu and having lived in Lahore with a middle-class family as a student in the late 1990s, for me, doing fieldwork in Lahore still somehow felt like doing fieldwork close to home. Doing fieldwork in Oslo, which is my home, I sometimes felt more of an outsider. Although I had Norwegian friends of Pakistani origin, I knew little about religious life in the Pakistani diaspora when I entered the field.

As a woman with Urdu skills, I could access groups that are less studied, at least by Western male researchers. As a female, I could access both men and women and, as pointed out by other scholars, women researchers in contexts where gender segregation is practised often have a much higher degree of ‘role flexibility’ than do men, with access to both genders’ worlds (Grünenfelder, 2014; Papanek, 1971).

### *Research ethics*

The formalization of research ethics in guidelines like those begun in the 1990s by Norway’s National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities (NESH, 2006) is a relatively new phenomenon. However, ethics has had a central place throughout the history of science (Tranøy, 1988). Formally guided research ethics, such as the NESH’s, are invaluable tools. They facilitate our thinking about ethics as an integral part of the research process, from design to dissemination.

In the following section, I reflect on some issues of particular pertinence to my project. They include various obligations: namely, to inform research subjects, to obtain free and informed consent, to share information, and to speak up and correct misuse and misrepresentation of the research. While these ethical issues are central to many types of research, doing research on Islamic charity accentuates them, not least in an era flourishing with antagonistic narratives of the West versus Islam and Islam versus the West, in both Norway and Pakistan.

Post-9/11, Islamic charity organizations have frequently been suspected as covers for terrorist organizations, channelling funds to covert activities (Benthall, 2007). In this context, a study of Muslims’ religious practices, how they organize charity and transnationally finance welfare and development projects could undoubtedly be sensitive topics that potential informants might be reluctant to discuss. I would not have been surprised if some were sceptical or unwilling to talk. It is also relevant to mention a report that was published by Hege Storhaug, the information director of Human Rights Services, a Norwegian think tank known for its critical stance on Islam and strong anti-immigration

agenda (Hauge Nærland, 2006). The report cast the ICC and MQI Norway, the main cases in my study, in a negative light, which very likely made some of my potential research participants reluctant to participate. As one explained to me: ‘Even if we have nothing to hide, we don’t know how we will be represented. We don’t want to be misrepresented. It is not that we do not trust your intention, but we are afraid others with particular political agendas will misuse what you write, take it out of context.’

I received many questions about my interest in this particular topic, and I am quite sure that some people wondered if what I answered was my true agenda. A public revelation right before I started my fieldwork, that Norway had intelligence agents in Pakistan, likely worked against allaying people’s suspicion in Pakistan (Dawn Staff Reporter, 2012). I myself was conscious of the possibility that my phone might be bugged, my emails read and my research materials confiscated; I took this into account when managing my data. The topic of Islamic charity is not sensitive only in Pakistan: the week I started my fieldwork in Oslo, the media reported that the Norwegian Police Security Service confiscated funds collected by an Islamic charity organization to help Syrian conflict victims (Hovde Andersen, 2013). The charges were later dropped. Still, incidents like these contribute to an environment of distrust. My strategy, thus, was to be open about what I was doing, but to protect my data well. Researching sensitive topics in foreign settings makes one painfully aware of the need to reflect on issues related to power and representation (Carling et al., 2014).

#### *Doing research on a sensitive topic*

Doing research on religion is sensitive, particularly when it involves individuals’ personal practices and experiences. Researching Islamic charity is particularly delicate, as it involves talking to people about matters that are seen by some as being between the individual and God. When I met with 20-something year-old Mariam<sup>72</sup> at her local mosque in Oslo, it seemed she felt a little awkward. She soon explained:

Within Islam, when you give charity, you have to give it in a way that if your right hand gives, your left shouldn’t know that you have given it ... so I thought it would be very...eh... interesting? ... to talk about it ... because it’s not something you should mention, it’s just something you have to do.

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<sup>72</sup> This is a pseudonym.

That Mariam still agreed to talk about her personal religious practice, I took as a sign of trust. Building rapport and gaining trust is essential when doing qualitative research. It is necessary to get good and ‘truthful’ data, but also to properly inform research participants about the project. They must give their free and informed consent. I spent time describing the research objectives, myself, my institutional affiliations, my funding, how I would anonymize the data<sup>73</sup> and how I would disseminate the results. It can of course be difficult to ascertain whether the research participants actually understand what they agreed to be part of, if they have limited knowledge about what research is. Along these lines, I found it useful to think about informed consent as a continuous process, not something that research participants give once and for all before an interview. Being part of the research should be voluntary, and it is important that the participants have the opportunity to withdraw. I did not ask for written consent, but made sure to tell my informants during the interview that they could at any time withdraw themselves as participants, withdraw parts of the interview and say some things ‘off the record’.<sup>74</sup> I provided an information sheet in Norwegian and in English, including my contact details, so that participants could get in touch if they wanted. I took care to inform them about the independent status of research in Norway, emphasizing how I am free to draw my own conclusions. In addition, I spent some time informing the participants about my own background, my personal motivation for doing the research, my professional background as a researcher and development practitioner in Pakistan and my capacity to speak and understand Urdu. Openness about my own background and motivations were important for my integrity as a researcher, and likely contributed to trust creation and better rapport with the participants.

The challenges attached to ascertaining informed consent makes it the responsibility of the researcher to critically evaluate participants’ ability to assess potential risks, as well as to evaluate participants’ position to decide themselves whether to contribute or not. This includes assessing relations of power between researcher and research participants or between the research participants and the individual referring the research participant to the researcher. Here, many issues come into play, such as the positionality and experience of the research participants. However, this is not to say that research participants are not in a position to make choices and take risks. On the contrary, I believe that people who know the local context are often better placed for assessing risks and making sound judgments. The

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<sup>73</sup> All data have been anonymized and pseudonyms were given to informants cited in the text.

<sup>74</sup> No research participants withdrew, but some asked for certain issues to be discussed off the record. These were mainly related to the political nature of the movements. These sections of interviews were not included in the transcripts.

important point is that researchers stay conscious of how relations of power and access to information influence this process. I believe it is also crucial to appreciate the knowledge and agency of research participants, recognizing that they, too, may have reasons for wanting to be part of the project, for example, in order to tell their story, meet a foreigner, or to do dawa.

### **Field notes from Faisalabad, April 2013**

On a hot spring day in April, I had been invited by the MWF to join a collective marriage ceremony arranged by the local MQI chapter in Faisalabad, and was driving the two hours from Lahore with staff from MWF headquarters in Lahore. Thirty young couples were getting married. The wedding ceremony was held in a massive tent construction, with separate parts for women and men. The women's part was buzzing with small talk as the brides' relatives and friends were catching up. The brides were seated on a stage, dressed in heavily beaded, pink wedding gowns. I was seated on the stage together with what seemed to be the most prominent women in MQI Faisalabad. Suddenly, I was asked to join the speakers in the male part, to say some words to the newlyweds. I was reluctant, but the pressure was on: 'Please, madam, the women will love to hear you speak.' So I did, after the movement politician, the district officer and the manager of the welfare organizations had given their speeches. I thought I could use the opportunity to say who I am and why I was there. By the many curious looks I had received, I was sure many would like to know. I got a bit nervous, but managed to say something about the respect for each other in marriage. I wanted to say something to the women. After all, I was allowed to participate in their wedding ceremony. I also felt I should do it to give something back to the organization that was offering such great hospitality. It illustrates how power relations in the field are complex – that even if you, as a researcher, would have liked to be 'a fly on the wall', you are not some objective outside observer. Before you know it, you are a guest speaker and a guest of honour.

### *Researchers' accountability*

It has been argued that development studies – because of the instrumentality of the research and the potential effects that policy can have on human lives – ought to pay more attention to ethical standards related to research impact and researchers' multiple accountabilities (Sumner & Tribe, 2008, p. 10). Although my thesis is not primarily concerned with contributing to policy and practice, the research is part of a broader production of knowledge on a topic that is arguably of societal interest in both Norway and Pakistan. As such, there are a number of issues related to researchers' accountability that are relevant to my work. Perhaps most important is the accountability to the people participating in my project, how I present their stories, and their understandings of reality. When writing about potentially sensitive issues – that may be exploited by actors' polarized political agendas – I understand that there is always a danger of misrepresentation or of being held accountable for giving air

to specific political views. I was aware that the two mosque environments that served as my primary case studies were previously misrepresented in a poor-quality, highly ideological (Islam-critical) publication. This made me particularly conscious of how I would represent my participants.

The ethics of representing ‘the other’ was one of the most concerning issues to me during this research process. I would wonder: what right did I have to represent these people and organizations? How could I represent them respectfully? My analysis and account will not be a presentation of their views, but rather my interpretation of what they say – which is likely differ from how they see themselves and how they would represent themselves. Is it more difficult and challenging to represent people seemingly so different to me, than to represent those who are more like me? I was unsure, but the fact that many of my interviewees differed from me in their ideological and religious beliefs (critical aspects of my enquiry), made me attentive to these differences and cautious in how I represented them. It required a consciousness of the unequal power relationship in research, where the researcher holds power to represent – and misrepresent.

Representing others involves researchers’ responsibility to communicate research findings and results. These may be disseminated not only to the academic community, but also in a form that contributes to the public debate and, based on research competence and findings, helps shape public opinions. Yet, even when I acknowledge my multiple accountabilities – to research participants, the academic community, research funders and the general public – I am not ultimately in control of how my research may be used or misused, once published. This underscores how critical it is to ensure that the research does not reveal information about individuals that could harm them. It is a reminder to reflect on potential positive and negative consequences of one’s research, intended or unintended.

## 7. Summary of articles

**Table 2. Overview of articles**

No.	Title	Data	Authors	Journal
1.	Transnational Islamic charity as everyday rituals	Mainly from Norway	Marta Bivand Erdal and Kaja Borchgrevink	Published in <i>Global Networks</i>
2.	With faith in development: Organizing transnational Islamic charity	From Norway, Pakistan and the UK	Kaja Borchgrevink and Marta Bivand Erdal	Accepted for publication by <i>Progress in Development Studies</i>
3.	Agents of change? Women's religious activism and development work in Pakistan	Mainly from Pakistan	Kaja Borchgrevink	Submitted to <i>Religion and Gender</i>
4.	NGOization of Islamic charity: Claiming legitimacy in changing institutional contexts	From Pakistan, complemented by data from Norway and the UK	Kaja Borchgrevink	Under review with <i>Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations</i>

### 7.1. Article 1

#### **Transnational Islamic charity as everyday rituals**

Marta Bivand Erdal and Kaja Borchgrevink,

*Global networks*, 17(1), 130–146.

The focus of this article is on the intersections of migrants' development engagements with their religious practices. While the contribution of migrants to development in their country of origin is by now a well-researched area, relatively scant attention has been given to how religion motivates migrants' development engagements. This article seeks to contribute to scholarship on the role of religion in the migration–development nexus through a study of how ideals and practices of Islamic charity intersect with and motivate the ways in which Muslim migrants of Pakistani origin and their descendants in Oslo, Norway, engage to help people in need and contribute to development in their country of origin and elsewhere.



Rather than taking development projects as a starting point, the article draws on an inductive analysis of what the informants do to help people in need, and to contribute to development. We use Islamic charity to refer both to a set of ideals, drawn from religious texts or teachings, and to the practices that correspond to such ideals in the lives of practising Muslims. Drawing on studies of everyday religion and migrants' routinized transnational practices, we use 'everyday rituals' to locate rituals in the context of everyday experiences. The intersections of migrants' development engagements with their religious practices is explored through the prism of 'everyday rituals', understood as human actions which express and may also reinforce, ideals. By focusing on transnational Islamic charity, we recognize the significance of the transnational social field as a site of performance of everyday rituals, and as a universe of meaning for many of our research participants.

The article draws on 35 interviews in Oslo, Norway, over the period 2012–2014. Research participants include individuals who define themselves as practising Muslims who were recruited on an individual basis from two particular mosque environments, or from within a diaspora development network, or from a multi-ethnic Muslim NGO.

Applying the concept of everyday rituals to the context of transnational Islamic charity, we find that everyday rituals not only translate ideals into practices, but also reinforce the ideals through their continued enactment over time as well as across geographic space. The article analyses the way in which Islamic charity, expressed through everyday rituals, motivates and intersects with diasporic development engagements. We analyse and discuss (i) Islamic charity as social and religious obligation; (ii) Islamic charity rituals as connections between the everyday and the eternal; (iii) the intersections between Islamic charity and development activities; (iv) divine dimension in motivations for development engagements; and (v) aspects relating to Islamic charity and transnational ties beyond the migrant generation.

We argue that that 'everyday rituals' is a useful concept for exploring the role of religion in motivating migrants' development engagements. We find that a sense of duty to engage is present among the research participants, which brings out the interrelatedness of transnational and transcendental connections. Islamic ideals and principles contribute to motivating migrants' development engagements not just in terms of duty, but also in relation to what kinds of activities they support and engage in. These can be short-term relief or longer-term development initiatives that aim at social change, thereby likening Islamic charity, as discussed by the research participants, to non-religious humanist ideals, and with

mainstream aid and development practice. A distinction brought out in the analysis was the salience of a third, divine actor in addition to the givers and receivers.

Examining Islamic charity and transnational ties beyond the migrant generation, we find that young post-migrant-generation Muslims continues to engage transnationally, but that the religious obligation becomes relatively stronger than familial obligations. The article thus argues that adding Islamic charity to studies of diaspora development engagements contributes new and significant perspectives, which nuance the ways in which post-migration generation engagements may be understood. By adopting a broad and encompassing research perspective focusing on peoples' experience in the form of lived religion and everyday rituals, we have demonstrated how the study of everyday life can give insight into religiosity – and to the interrelatedness of different motivations for, and functions of, particular human actions. These observations might have been missed if the focus was limited to a predefined conception of either 'religious practice' or 'development practice'.

## 7.2. Article 2

### **With faith in development: organizing transnational Islamic charity**

Kaja Borchgrevink and Marta Bivand Erdal

Accepted for publication by *Progress in Development Studies*

The article examines the different roles religion can play when migrants organize for development. The article brings together the literature on religion and development in development studies, and the literature on organized diaspora development engagements within migration studies; two strands of literature that very rarely speak directly to each other.

The article takes Muslim migrants' religious practice of giving charity as its starting point. This is a departure from earlier studies of religion in development, which, with their strong focus on faith-based organizations (FBOs) have been criticized for being instrumental, narrow, and normative. Instead, this article sets out to unpack what it means when something is described as 'faith-based'. In addition, the article explores the different roles that religion can take on in migrants' development engagements, including formal organizations and informal groups, and organizations in which religion has explicit and implicit roles.

The article draws on multi-sited fieldwork in Oslo, London, and Punjab during the period 2012–2015. The data consists of semi-structured interviews as well as informal interviews, field visits to offices and project sites, and organizational documents. Overall, it draws on 76 interviews (36 with women and 40 with men), which reflect the organized side of transnational Islamic charity, where men are more prominent, especially in formal positions. With this in mind, women's groups and organizations were purposefully included, in order to contribute to a more gender-balanced sample, allowing us to explicitly explore women's involvement in transnational Islamic charity.

Based on a preliminary inventory of Islamic charity in the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo, five arenas where Islamic charity is practised were identified: the mosque, women's religious groups, transnational religious organizations, Muslim NGOs, and diaspora development organizations. Focusing on these arenas, the article examines how transnational Islamic charity is organized, with a specific focus on the roles of religion and organizational forms.

To examine the relationship between organizational forms (informal and formal) and roles of religion (explicit and implicit), the article presents a fourfold typology. The analysis of these four dimensions reveals that: (i) in formal organizations where religion has an explicit role, religion can be a *raison d'être* (such as in religious organizations) or a unifying principle (as in Muslim NGOs, for example); (ii) in informal organizations where religion has an explicit role (for example, in women's Quran study groups), Islamic charity is conceived as an integral part of religious practice; (iii) in formal organizations where religion takes an implicit role, religion can still motivate and structure development engagements; and (iv) in informal organizations where religion has an implicit role, faith may still be a motivating and structuring factor. The typology, distinguishing between implicit and explicit roles of religion, aids an analysis of the roles that religion can assume in diaspora development engagements in a less static and formalistic way than what has been common in studies of FBOs. Not limiting the focus to FBOs, but including both formal and informal modes of organizing allows for a broader analysis of the role of religion in diaspora development engagement, and in organizations and activities that are not explicitly identified as 'faith-based'. The article finds that transnational Islamic charity often intersects with diasporic development engagements. The analysis of this intersection reveals how the roles that religion can take on are not only functional, but also substantive, shaping the approaches to development, the activities that are supported, and the recipients of assistance, and relational, as transnational religious ties between, for example, mosques or transnational

religious organizations often intersect with other transnational ties related to kin, and to social and political networks. The article demonstrates how a perspective which foregrounds religion in its diverse articulations, adds valuable insights to the ways in which we understand diaspora contributions to development.

### 7.3. Article 3

#### **Agents of Change? Women's religious activism and development work in Pakistan**

Kaja Borchgrevink

Submitted to *Religion and Gender*

This article examines the intersection of religion, gender, and development through an analysis of religious practice and development engagement among women activists in two religio-political aid organizations in contemporary Pakistan, namely the Al Khidmat Women Trust and the Minhaj Women League. I examine specifically how religion influences these women's conceptions and practices of development, and how these practices are gendered, taking into account the perspectives and experiences of the women activists.

The article draws on qualitative data from Pakistan, during the period 2012–2015, mainly in the form of semi-structured interviews with 30 women engaged in welfare and development work with two religio-political movements, Jamaat-e-Islami and Minhaj-ul-Quran International. These are complemented with interviews with male members of the organizations, observations from project sites, and materials published by the organizations.

Exploring the intersection of religion, gender, and development in the context of religio-political women's activism and development work, the article draws on insights from the literature on Muslim women (found in post-structuralist and postcolonial feminist scholarship), and from studies of gender and religion which, in different religious traditions and geographical contexts, have challenged images of religious women depicted as victims of their religious belief.

The article argues that the religio-political women activists engage in multiple and competing discourses on gender and development existing in contemporary Pakistan, which in different ways influence their conceptions of development and forms of engagement.

The Al Khidmat Women Trust and the Minhaj Women League are situated in a broad landscape of women's organizations in Pakistan that share a focus on women, provide

assistance to women, and work to transform women's position in society. In contrast to feminist-inspired women's organizations, the religio-political women activists endorse gender ideologies that are actively promoting rather than challenging patriarchy, and construct themselves opposed to what they consider to be Western feminism. Situated in religio-political movements advancing gender ideologies based on gender complementarity and segregation, religion and gender shape women's development engagements in substantial ways: religion and gender influence what women do, and how they do it.

Being part of gender-traditional religious organizations, the women working in the Al Khidmat Women Trust and the Minhaj Women League can be assumed to be socialized into gender roles of domesticity. A close read of women's discourse and practice, however, reveals that gender ideologies are not fixed, but are instead negotiated by the women activists.

The women activists practise purdah by covering themselves, and by gender-segregated organizing of activities, but unlike more traditionalistic interpretations of purdah which confine women to the home, these women participate in the public sphere. These women's organizations contribute to upholding and reinforcing gender-segregated environments – yet they provide a space for women to engage in these ideological movements as activists, in professional and volunteer capacities. From a feminist perspective, these women's activism might be seen as reifying women's subordinate position. While the ideal gender roles espoused by these women emphasize women's domestic role, these ideals do not prevent women activists from participating in public life. Instead, the gender-segregated organizations can be seen as providing women activists with a space to be active outside the home, to contribute to society, and to realize their religious, social, and political commitments and interests, in ways that are in congruence with their interpretations of Islam.

This study further reveals that although religion and the ideology of the respective movements influence women's everyday life and activism, religion is not the only factor shaping women's subjectivities. The understandings of development, of ways of engaging in helping people in need, and of contributing to improve the current conditions, also reflect particular class-based subjectivities related to the advantaged position of women belonging to the urban, educated middle class and elite in Pakistan. The religio-political activists can be seen as utilizing the space opened up to women's participation in public life in Pakistan over the past decades.

The women activists share a vision of development in which material and spiritual dimensions are integrated. This is reflected in their rationales and strategies of engagement: they work for change at the individual and the societal level simultaneously through a combination of moral and material improvements. Spreading what they believe to be the right way of Islam becomes, for them, a necessary and integrated part of what can be described as their approach to development. The analysis also finds that the women activists balance ideology and pragmatism, interpreting and appropriating Islamic teachings, local cultural practices as well as elements from mainstream gender and development discourses in their local contexts. The article concludes that by negotiating which norms and practices to uphold and which ones to resist, the women activist can be seen as active agents of change.

#### **7.4. Article 4**

##### **NGOization of Islamic charity: Claiming legitimacy in changing institutional contexts**

Kaja Borchgrevink

Under review with *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*

This article focuses on the ‘NGOization’ of Islamic charity through a study of the Al Khidmat Foundation and the Minhaj Welfare Foundation, two Islamic welfare organizations in Pakistan originating within religio-political movements. Once traditional distributors of charity, the organizations are now presenting themselves as professional development NGOs. Analysing how organizations are finding new ways to present themselves as relevant and legitimate providers of aid, the article examines what such a process of NGOization has entailed, and analyses how it has affected the ways in which the organizations make claims to legitimacy. The article complements recent analysis of transnational Muslim NGOs, shedding light on actors originating in the Global South, who emerge as significant in the mainstream aid and development field but are seldom studied as actors in aid.

The article draws on data produced through multi-sited, qualitative fieldwork in Punjab, Oslo, and London, carried out in the period 2012–2015. It includes 72 semi-structured interviews, of which 30 are with individuals associated with the two religio-political movements in Pakistan, as well as 24 in Oslo and two in London with people

associated with the two movements. The data also refers to 16 interviews with individuals working in other NGOs and the government of Pakistan, to written material made available by the organizations, information from their websites, social media, and to observation from visits to their offices, projects sites, and events.

The article posits that the NGOization of Islamic charity signifies not only a change in organizational structure and legal status, but also more profound changes in organizational discourse and practice. Four trends indicating the NGOization of Islamic charity are identified in the two organizations: (i) a shift in self (re)presentation from partisan movement-orientated welfare organizations to neutral providers of aid; (ii) a change in focus of activities from charity-based community-welfare to humanitarian aid and development; (iii) a shift from volunteerism to employment of salaried development professionals; and (iv) a broadening of funding sources, from relying almost exclusively on community members, to reach out to broader donor bases, including institutional donors. The NGOization of Islamic charity has introduced new stakeholders to the organizations. These stakeholders are both external to the organizations in terms of partners and donors from the mainstream development industry, and internal to the organizations through the employment of development experts.

Combining insights from new institutional theory with the conception of discourse and practice in development studies, the article examines how this changing institutional context affects organizational legitimacy. The article finds that the process of NGOization involves not only professionalization and depoliticization among these actors, but also changes ways of practising, conceiving of, and talking about Islamic charity and aid and development. By analysing the normative, pragmatic, and cognitive dimensions of institutional legitimacy, it is argued that to meet the expectations of diverse stakeholders, the organizations combine multiple sources of authority from both religious and professional discourses. It finds that the organizations situated at the interface of discourses and practices of Islamic charity, on one hand, and international aid and development, on the other, combine religious and professional authority when making claims to legitimacy. By balancing these different sources of authority, they create new legitimate discourses and practices in the process of becoming 'Muslim NGOs'.

The article demonstrates how the concept of legitimacy is a useful tool for exploring institutional change within aid organizations. Islamic traditions of charity provide a normative framework which links social practice with transcendental authority. This framework is not static; it changes with context and over time. By applying an understanding

of organizational legitimacy as multifaceted and socially constructed, the article sheds light on the importance of contextual and relational aspects of organizational legitimacy, which has been given scant attention in NGO research. Studying the transformation of Islamic charity further reveals the continued significance of religion – including its moral and transcendental aspects – in the discourses, practices and identities of Muslim NGOs.



## **8. Conclusion**

While working on this thesis, I have come to realize that there are many preconceptions about Islamic charity ‘out there’. Many, I found, are wrong. Among the most common was that Islamic charity is based on handouts, and that, by extension, it is not contributing to change. For all the media attention on Islam over the last few years, I find that surprisingly little is devoted to Muslims’ charity, aid, or development engagements. In Norway, for most people, Islamic charity remains a well-kept secret. This is very different in Pakistan, where Islamic charity is part of public life. But also there, perhaps because it is so ordinary, I found limited reflection on the relationship between Islamic charity and development. Fortunately, this is changing among development scholars and practitioners, and the last few years have given rise to interest in Muslim NGOs and charity work. My thesis aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by shedding light on how some aspects of Muslim religious practices – what I call ‘Islamic charity’ – relate to efforts to help the needy and contribute to development and social change. Taking Islamic charity as a point of departure leads to a broad field of enquiry. In this section, I bring together my overall conclusions from the study, attempting to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis.

### **8.1. Uncovering Islamic charity and development**

Research Question 1 asks how Islamic charity relates to conceptions and practices of aid and development among actors in Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora. My thesis has revealed that ideals and practices of Islamic charity are diverse. Islamic charity is motivated by individual obligations; it is fulfilled in secret, in order to please God and to reap personal religious rewards. But it also inspires collective action, where people come together to help the needy and to work towards ‘a better world’. I have found that ideals and practices of Islamic charity are not fixed, but rather are fluid, interpreted and made sense of in particular contexts. My analysis of individual and collectively organized Islamic charity in Punjab, Oslo, and London, clearly demonstrated how actors relate to and draw on ideals and practices from the Islamic tradition, in addition to using discourses and practices found among mainstream aid and development actors. This could be seen in my discussion of the ‘NGOization’ of Islamic charity (article 4), where organizations are making claims to legitimacy in a changing institutional context by combining discourses and practice from the Islamic tradition and mainstream development. It could also be seen in the production of counter-discourses (article 3), such as when women in religio-political organizations in

Pakistan provide different understandings of ‘gender equality’ and ‘women’s rights’, sometimes framed in direct opposition to the conventional understandings of those terms in discourses of gender and development.

#### *Beyond faith-based organizations (FBOs)*

This enquiry into how Islamic charity is organized has brought out the different explicit and implicit roles which religion can take in different contexts (article 2). Distinguishing between implicit and explicit modes has enabled an exploration of the role of religion in a less static or formalistic way than is common to studies of FBOs. Not limiting the focus to FBOs permitted me to undertake a broader analysis of the role of religion in diaspora development engagement, including organizations and activities that are not explicitly identified as ‘faith-based’. In this regard, seemingly secular practices or organizations are also often value-driven and, although their motivation might not be religious, many non-religious development initiatives can nonetheless be seen as ‘faith-based’ in some way.

My analysis of the relationship between Islamic charity and development-orientated activities in different contexts also revealed how religion can be used strategically. In settings in which development is conventionally framed in the secular language of the mainstream aid industry, the religious dimension may be toned down. This can be seen when diaspora organizations in Norway de-emphasize religion while interacting with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. The religious aspect may be emphasized by the same organizations when funding is sought through religious arenas (article 2). Similarly, the strategic use of religion can be seen when the head of MWF is represented as a philanthropist to external audiences in the UK, and simultaneously as a spiritual leader to internal audiences in the UK and Pakistan. This illustrates how different sources of authority – expressed through particular forms of knowledge, text, and symbols – are drawn upon when organizations make claims to legitimacy in different contexts (article 4).

#### *Approaches to development*

Ideals and practices of Islamic charity can be seen as encompassing both short-term and long-term perspectives on helping people in need, and on contributing to social change. The actors in my study emphasized the importance of immediate, short-term efforts that aim to relieve immediate suffering, as well as the significance of longer-term sustainable development to enable people to take care of themselves and, through that, impact broader processes of societal development. For most of my interviewees, increasing education

access, improving health, and helping people to earn an income were considered important ways to improve conditions for individuals, and by extension, for society as a whole. Common to all the study's actors was the role played by Islamic teachings, and by the various ways to give charity (such as zakat, sadqa, *sadqa-e-jariyah*), in motivating and structuring the type of activities that were supported and in specifying when they occurred.

Religion was found to play a varying role in conceptions and practices of development. Examining how women activists in Pakistan give meaning to what they do, their vision of a good society, and how to achieve it (article 3) revealed how, in their view, material and spiritual dimensions of development are interrelated: individual piety is seen as a requirement for creating an ideal, moral society. Social change is seen as contingent on change in an individual. Women's activism combines religious training (*tarbiyat*) at the individual level with *dawa* and Islamic charity (such as helping the needy through volunteer work). This explicates how individual religious practices and collective endeavours are in that context intertwined in understandings of development processes. It also reveals ideas about poverty, and how to reduce poverty and improve people's lives, that focuses on the individual and not on the structural inequalities in society.

The exploration of motivations for actors' engagement in Islamic charity, social activism, and development-related activities also revealed the interconnectedness between worldly and transcendental spheres, where investments in relieving suffering and improving the conditions of this world are simultaneous investments in the next world, in one's afterlife (articles 1, 3, and 4).

## **8.2. Gendered Islamic charity**

If these ideals and practices of Islamic charity are the key to understanding how aid and development is conceived of and practised, Research Question 2 asks how they are gendered. In this study, I found that while Islamic charity is an individual obligation for men and women alike, gender norms clearly influence what they do.

### *Gender variations*

There are significant gendered variations in the ways in which Islamic charity is organized, both in Pakistan and the diaspora. I noticed that among the actors in the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo, men are represented more strongly in formal development organizations, while women's collective engagement often takes place through informal women's groups whose main purpose is religious teaching and practice (article 2). I also saw how gender is

interrelated with migrant generations, as women-only groups are commonly led by women who have themselves migrated to Norway (although Norwegian-born women may also take part in these groups), and co-gender initiatives more often take place among Muslims born in Norway. In the post-migrant generations, women have a more active part in formal organizations, be they gender-segregated or mixed-gender environments.

Organizing in informal arenas, working as volunteers, and mobilizing resources through their personal networks, women frequently go uncounted as development actors. In the process of examining the relationship between women's religious practice, social engagement, and development work in Oslo and Punjab, I found that women play significant roles as development actors in their local communities, and as part of transnational communities. By focusing on women's arenas (such as women's Quran study groups and women's religio-political organizations), actors as well as discourses and practices of development that exist alongside the mainstream, are exposed. I find that these women play important roles in shaping conceptions and practices of aid and development in their respective religious movements. In both Oslo and Punjab, women's groups and organizations provide a space for women's collective engagement with development.

#### *Women's religio-political activism and development work*

In the Pakistani context, the study focused specifically on women's activism in religio-political organizations, examining how religion influences conceptions and practices of development and how these practices are gendered (article 3). The two cases studied (the Al Khidmat Trust for Women, and the Minhaj Women League) represent a particular subset of religio-political women's organizations involved in welfare and development work in Pakistan. Associated with the religio-political movements of JI and MQI respectively, the organizations are strictly gender-segregated. While these settings clearly are not representative of all women's organizations in Pakistan, I found them particularly interesting as they give insight into how religiously based gender ideologies might shape development discourse and practice. Gender ideologies promoting role complementarity between men and women influence the activities, ideals and practice of these religio-political women's organizations, from planning to implementation. Working in gender-segregated organizations, men and women collaborate in executing relief and development work. Reflective of their ideas regarding appropriate gender roles and relations, they have organized their work so that men do what, in their view, women cannot do, such as constructing tents and distributing relief help in flood waters. Similarly, women do what they

believe men cannot do: they focus on women, assessing women's needs and providing assistance to women in a gender-segregated fashion (they provide female doctors, women's centres with vocational training course for women, and separated education for girls and boys). They can be seen as advancing particular gender ideologies, but also as responding to the needs of the women they intend to help, balancing ideology with pragmatic concerns.

In contexts where gender segregation is a norm, these women's organizations can be seen as essential for the inclusion of women in social work and activism. On one hand, these women's organizations contribute to upholding and reinforcing gender-segregated environments; on the other hand, they provide a space for women to contribute as development actors, in ways that women find congruent with their interpretations of Islam, and with what they consider to be appropriate gender roles. Further, my analysis revealed how gender ideologies are also negotiated and are thus dynamic. As such, more contextual, situated studies of gendered subjectivities, taking religion's role into account, are needed in order to gain insight into ways of thinking about and engaging in development among actors who are situated outside the mainstream aid and development field.

The women can be seen as utilizing their own gender identity to connect with the women they set out to assist. One might, however, as I do in article 3, question whether these gender-based identities lead to an understanding and ability among the urban, mainly educated, middle- class and elite women to meet the needs of women in the low-income areas in which they work. The women activists espouse not only gendered identities, but also class-based subjectivities, revealing their assumptions about the ways in which the poor women they seek to assist, require saving and reforming.

When focusing exclusively on women, there is a danger of overemphasizing women's common interests, and of treating women as a homogenous category. Just as there is no such thing as a unitary feminist movement, the positions of 'religious women' are diverse. This study has focused on women associated with particular religio-political movements in Pakistan, and on engaged migrant women predominantly associated with religious networks and organizations in the Pakistani diaspora in Norway. The study has highlighted not only how women's subjectivities reflect religious or gendered subjectivities, but also how women's subject-positions are shaped by class, ethnicity, age, and geography. As such, the findings of this study are not representative of all religious women, neither in Pakistan nor the diaspora. Emphasizing religion in the analysis, as I have done in this study, may, however, prove useful for studies of gender and development in other contexts.

### **8.3. Islamic charity and diaspora development**

In addressing Research Question 3, namely to investigate the role of Islamic charity in diaspora development engagements, this thesis has explored how migrants' everyday rituals of Islamic charity intersect with efforts to reduce poverty in their country of origin (article 1) and how transnational Islamic charity is organized (article 2). I found that ideals and practices of Islamic charity motivate and structure the development engagements of migrants, both individually and collectively.

#### *Multiple motivations: worldly and transcendental*

Taking Islamic charity as a starting point enabled me to reveal the interconnectedness of migrants' religious practice, and efforts to contribute to development in their country of origin. By conceptualizing Islamic charity in terms of everyday rituals (article 1), I examined what people do in their daily lives. This accentuated how in a research participant's universe of meaning, there are multiple, often intersecting motivations for engaging in charity, social activism and development. Everyday rituals connect the domain of ideals with that of practices. They foreground both the temporal connections between the here-and-now and the hereafter, and the geographic transnational connections between 'here' and 'there'. While helping people in need and contributing to increased social justice is understood as a religious obligation with tangible effects in this world, these actions simultaneously promise religious rewards affecting the givers' position on judgment day. The analysis also showed how these are not the only motivations and structures that influence people's behaviour, but rather that religious motivations intersect with other notions of solidarity based on familial and diasporic ties and on broader humanist ideals of helping people in need. The conceptualization of Islamic charity in terms of everyday rituals emerged as a useful tool to explore the role of religion in motivating migrants' development engagements.

#### *Transnational engagements*

In this study, I found that the practice of Islamic charity has substantial transnational dimensions. These are related to religious networks and organizations, in addition to religious practices performed by actors situated at different sites in the social field. The analysis also revealed the intersection of familial, social, political, economic, and religious aspects of migrant transnational engagements. With the religious dimensions of Islamic charity in the foreground, this study transcends the conventional focus on familial ties and other social obligations, showing how migrants' motivations for engaging in Islamic charity

and development work are multiple and overlapping. While familial and other social obligations can overlap with religious duties and practices, I found that religion can also be a motivation in itself. The all-encompassing nature of religion, linking the worldly with the other-worldly, makes the separation of religious from non-religious motivations almost meaningless for the participants in this study.

Institutions of Islamic charity also structure the ways in which migrants become involved in development in their country of origin and beyond. They do so by giving directions for how to engage, what activities to support and whom to help. While migrants' development engagements with their country of origin have been seen to change with generations, when familial ties weaken, a focus on religious practice indicates that ideals and practices of Islamic charity may contribute to sustained transnational activity. This can also be observed in the post-migrant generation, although perhaps in new ways. This can be for example in the case of Muslim youth activism in Oslo, where Muslim solidarities and broader notions of humanitarian ideas seem to be more important than transnational ties to the parents' country of origin (article 2).

#### **8.4. Studying development through Islamic charity**

I did not approach this subject with some preconceived, normative definition of what 'development' is, nor did I regard this as an enquiry into the theology of Islam; instead, I was curious about my research participants' lived experiences. Exploring how people come together and practise Islamic charity with a focus on organized religion (not only on religious organizations) revealed a broad variety of organizational modes – from religious gatherings to formal Muslim NGOs – through which actors in Pakistan and the diaspora seek to help people in need, and to contribute to development and social change. This suggests the importance of regarding religion, not merely as an add-on to be included in an analysis of development, but rather as a fundamental, potentially significant, social practice in any particular context. As a particular subset of faith based organizations, the organizations in this study are not representative of all faith-based organizations in Pakistan. Neither are the individual informants in Oslo representative of all Muslim Pakistani migrants in the diaspora. The cases in this study are very different to each other, in terms of types of organizations, ideological positions, etc. which makes it hard to generalize. Studying these different actors, as they operating in different contexts, however, have brought to the fore not only the diversity that exists, but also some of the similarities in how Islamic charity shapes development-related engagements across actors and contexts.

The findings in this thesis suggest that, in analysing development, it is useful for development researchers to broaden conceptions of what and who should be included in analysis of development, and to question who will be considered as actors, who is seen as contributing to development, and what is considered development by the actors themselves. This challenges the tendency to understand development only as that which is produced by targeted, technocratic interventions, disregarding other actors' contributions to broader processes of social and political change. I have argued that including a focus on religious discourse and practice produces a broader and more nuanced understanding of actors in development – and of what development is conceived to be by these different actors.

One of the main conclusions that can be drawn from my study concerns the limitations of employing a dichotomy between 'religious' or 'faith-based' understandings of development on one hand, and 'secular' ones on the other, which is how the role of religion in development is often framed in development research and practice. My analysis of how people give meaning to their religious practice, social engagement, and development work shows that to separate the religious from the secular gives little meaning to many of the actors involved. But this analysis is also useful beyond the research participants' self-reflections. Studies based on such dichotomies may in fact blur more than they reveal. In my study, I have found that religion can be both explicit and implicit; it can be used strategically or without any strategy at all. It informs the ways in which people conceptualize development – what they understand development to be – and how they engage to reach their objectives. This study's exploration of the relationship between Islamic charity and development highlights the interconnectedness between individuals' religious practice (giving zakat and sadqa, volunteering) and collective endeavours (organized Islamic charity, social activism, and Muslim NGOs). As such, including religion in the analysis allows for a broader and more nuanced understanding of actors in development, and of what development is conceived to be by these different actors. This thesis concludes that many aspects of Islamic charity, particularly where it has focused on activities to support longer-term social change, reflect a unique type of development in practice. This development practice is deeply embedded in cultural and religious norms and values, but is nevertheless influenced by globalized understandings of social, political, and economic development.



### **8.5. Emerging issues for further enquiry**

From the work on my thesis, three topics have emerged as particularly salient for further enquiry: the role of authority and power among actors in informal aid chains; recipients' perspectives on the role of religion in development; and further inquiry into the intersection of religion, gender and development.

#### *Authority and power in informal aid chains*

This thesis has revealed how issues of power and authority are central to the relationship between different actors engaged in Islamic charity and development. Islamic charity, like other forms of aid, involve relationships and 'aid chains' (Silk, 2004), where issues of power and authority are central and constantly negotiated. Discourses and practices of charity, aid or development involve both implicit and explicit relations of power between and among givers and recipients, actors here and there, South and North, secular and religious. This came to the fore in my thesis (article 2), where, in the analysis of religion's role in organizing transnational Islamic charity, issues of power and authority emerged as a significant dimension. Relatedly, issues of authority and questions over who defines what legitimate aid is (article 4), emerged as salient issues that merit further research.

#### *Recipients' perspectives on the role of religion in development*

How does religion influence recipients' perspectives, experiences, and expectations of aid and development? This study focused on Islamic charity and aid, as understood and practised by 'development actors'; the meaning they give to their practices and the visions and rationales they have for doing what they do. What remains to be studied in detail are the life-worlds of the recipients of this assistance, and how they conceive of the type of aid and development that is offered. I believe further research would be worthwhile, to investigate how local communities use religion in their efforts, how they interface with Islamic charity actors, and how religion is or is not understood to play a role among the recipients of aid.

#### *Religion, gender, and development*

Scholars of religion are increasingly attempting to understand the particular challenges that secular ideologies face in the 'post-secular era', and the implications of these challenges for development policy and practice (Tomalin 2015, p. 65). This enquiry into the meaning of development for women in religio-political organizations and how they work to achieve their aims, has shed light on a particular set of actors for whom religion provides an all-

encompassing frame of reference. I suggest that an interesting area for future research could be studies regarding the role of religion among Muslim women working in mainstream development NGOs, which could further enhance analysis of the intersection of religion, gender, and development.

## 9. References

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## **Part 2 – The articles**

## The articles



**Article 1**

**Transnational Islamic charity as everyday rituals**

Marta Bivand Erdal and Kaja Borchgrevink

*Global Networks* 17, 1 (2017) 130–146

# Transnational Islamic charity as everyday rituals

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**Abstract** *In this article, through a case study of transnational Islamic charity, we explore the intersection between migrant development engagements and religious practices. While migrant engagement in development is well known, the intersections of these with everyday religious practices are less so. We use the prism of ‘everyday rituals’, understood as human actions that connect ideals with practices. Everyday rituals not only express but also reinforce ideals, in this case those of Islamic charity in a context of sustained migrant transnationalism. The article draws on 35 interviews about Islamic charity, transnationalism and development with practising Muslims of Pakistani origin in Oslo, Norway. We argue that everyday rituals are a useful tool for exploring the role of religion in motivating migrant development engagements. This is because they include transcendental perspectives, bridge ideals and practices that connect the contemporary to the hereafter, encompass transnational perspectives, and are attentive to the ‘here’ and ‘there’ spatially in migrants’ lives.*

**Keywords** DEVELOPMENT, ISLAMIC, RELIGION, RITUALS, TRANSNATIONAL

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On a shelf in Aisha’s<sup>1</sup> living room, there is a small, discreet collection box. If she happens to have spare change when she is passing the box, Aisha will drop a few coins into it. She does not keep track of how often or how much. It is something she just does in passing, usually on a daily basis – sometimes when reminded of all she has to be grateful for, at other times when she learns of the pain and suffering of those less fortunate than herself. The latter are often people in the village where her mother still lives and about whom she gets updates whenever she and her mother speak on the phone. She always uses the money in the box to help other people. Sometimes she donates it to a development organization or initiative collecting money at the mosque, at others she sends it to Pakistan for her mother to pass on to those in need of assistance, or to victims of natural disasters or conflicts.

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*Global Networks* 17, 1 (2017) 130–146. ISSN 1470–2266. © 2016 The Author(s)  
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For Aisha, passing the box and dropping coins into it is a natural part of everyday life. This vignette reveals how migrants incorporate their religious practices into their contributions to development in their daily lives, thus highlighting the relationship in Islamic charity between ‘ideals’ and ‘practice’. The fact that migrants such as Aisha contribute to what one may conceive of as ‘development’ in their country of origin is well known. What is less well known is how ideals and practices of Islamic charity intersect with and motivate these engagements on an everyday basis. Our inductive analysis starts from an observation that these migrants intertwine ideals and practices in their Islamic charity and development engagements. The aim of this article is to explore how Islamic charity intersects with and motivates migrant development engagements. Rather than exploring this from the perspective of a particular definition of what constitutes ‘development’, we do so through an inductive analysis of what practising Muslims in Oslo – Pakistani migrants and their descendants – conceptualize as ‘Islamic charity’. We explore the intersections of migrant development engagements with religious practices through the prism of ‘everyday rituals’, understood as human actions that express, but may also reinforce, ideals. Through this we seek to contribute to the scholarship that explores relationships between religion, development and migrant transnationalism (Garbin 2014; Gardner and Grillo 2002; Levitt 2007; Singh 2013; Vásquez and DeWind 2014; Wong and Levitt 2014).

‘Islamic charity’ refers to both a set of ideals, rooted in Islamic theologies, and to practices, some of which are obligatory and others voluntary (Benthall 1999). The best-known Islamic charitable practice is *zakat*, the obligatory ‘tax’ of 2.5 per cent on annual surplus, one of the five pillars of Islam. It is an equal obligation for men and women – and Islamic scripture details who must offer these alms, who must not, and who are the rightful beneficiaries. There are also other charitable practices such as *qurbani*, the distribution of meat to the poor after the Eid ul-Adha;<sup>2</sup> *zakat-ul-fitr*, the offering of money to the poor so that they can also celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan; and *sadqa*,<sup>3</sup> the more general principle of performing good deeds, in particular helping the poor. Here, we are not primarily concerned with the theologies and the Islamic teaching underlying each of these ideals and associated practices, but rather with the ways in which the people we interviewed perform, articulate and reinforce Islamic charity through everyday rituals.

We use the term ‘transnational Islamic charity’ to depict the transnational social field that creates a universe of meaning for many of our research participants. Islamic charity refers both to a set of ideals, drawn from religious texts or teachings, and to the practices that correspond to such ideals in the lives of practising Muslims. The interactions between ideals and practices, however, make a binary distinction that is of little value here. Rather, drawing on emergent work on ‘lived religion’, focusing on material cultures and spiritual practices, at the opposite end of the spectrum from studies of ‘descriptive religion’, conventionally focusing on belief and membership (Ammerman 2014), we approach this inductively, from a perspectives drawn analytically from our research participants. Therefore, we approach religion in people’s lives not as a dichotomy between ideals and practice, but as encompassing the ways in which they make sense of their everyday lived experiences. Seeing transnational Islamic charity in

terms of everyday rituals therefore encompasses the religious ideals as well as the everyday practices.

We understand Islamic charity as both inspired by and as an articulation of religious consciousness. Since human motives are rarely clear-cut, with regard to our decision to categorize everyday rituals as ‘Islamic charity’, one could argue that for secularized Muslims such motivations are as much socio-cultural as religious. We thus understand Islamic charity among our research participants as everyday rituals in which the religious, social and cultural are strongly interrelated and reflective of a holistic approach to life worlds. Nabeel, for example, told us that ‘Islam is a way of living ... this affects all aspects of your life and it isn’t only linked to prayer ... it is how you behave as well ... how you treat other people.’ This statement echoes debates on the methodological challenges of studying ‘the religious’, as if a category isolated from social, cultural, political and economic dimensions (Berghammer and Fliegenschnee 2014; Bolognani and Mellor 2012).

By understanding Islamic charity as everyday rituals, we build on previous research on migrants’ religious and non-religious ceremonies, with reference to life-cycle rites such as funerals and weddings (Gardner and Grillo 2002), and studies of lived religion (Amermann 2006, 2014; McGuire 2008). We argue for increased attention to migrants’ mundane everyday religious practices, practices that are not only associated with life-cycle events, or public festivals in temples, mosques or shrines, but that happen in the home, with friends, privately. Adopting a transnational optic, we investigate migrants’ everyday religious practices with openness to the transnational social field (Levitt 2003).

We explore how migrants’ everyday rituals associated with Islamic charity intersect with their motivations and efforts to help people in Pakistan and beyond. Through an ethnographically based analysis, we tease out the ways in which the everyday rituals of transnational Islamic charity intersect with development and humanitarian ideals. We thus seek to contribute to discussions on religion in the migration–development nexus.

In the section below, we outline the conceptual framework that sets out how we use the concept of *everyday rituals* to connect the levels of ideals with those of practices. We follow this with a presentation of our methods and data, before proceeding in the main part of the article to analyse how everyday rituals of Islamic charity and migrants’ motivations and development engagements intersect. In the conclusion, we consider the usefulness of the concept of everyday rituals for studies of social practices within transnational social fields, drawing on our analysis of these in the contexts of Islamic charity and migrant development engagements.

### **Conceptualizing transnational Islamic charity as everyday rituals**

Aisha’s religious practice described at the beginning of this article – in which she puts a little money in her collection box as she passes it – may be conceptualized as an *everyday ritual* (Al-Ali 2002: 256; Gardner and Grillo 2002: 185). We understand rituals to be human actions that are both expressions and reinforcements of particular ideals, in this case Islamic charity. Rituals connect ideals to practices; they are bearers

of meaning, at once translating ideals into practices and reinforcing said ideals through their continued enactment over time and across geographic space. The reinforcement of ideals, however, does not entail their conservation, for reinforcement can involve change. This is the result of rituals being ‘everyday routinized activities and practices’, where meaning and activity, intention and outcome, are intertwined (Gardner and Grillo 2002: 183; Salih 2002). Given that transnational Islamic charity intersects with migrants sending remittances and engaging in development, questions arise about what kinds of motivations trigger what kinds of actions. On the collective level, we can see Islamic charity as motivating migrants to engage in development through structuring and organizing the charitable efforts that are set out in the Islamic calendar (Erdal and Borchgrevink 2015). On an individual level, routinized everyday rituals of transnational Islamic charity can help to structure and motivate migrant’s development engagement.

The study of rituals has roots in both sociology and anthropology, with Durkheim’s (1915) work focusing on rituals as significant for the renewal of bonds of solidarity as the starting point of a literature that has since developed in different directions. We may understand rituals as ‘conventionalized, stylized, communicative and meaningful human actions’ (Smith 2007: 506). For the purposes of this article, however, we see them as those human actions that, in different ways and more or less actively, connect the everyday with the hereafter (*akhira*)<sup>4</sup> and thus provide an eternal perspective. This transcendental dimension is a defining feature of the everyday rituals of Islamic charity. At an individual level, they relate strongly to the notion of duty – where the fulfilment of obligations at one level serves the function of helping other human beings, but at another level serves to invest in the eternal. Significantly, there is an inherent inter-connection between the eternal perspective and the here and now. In other words, the migrants conventionalize, stylize, and communicate the everyday rituals of Islamic charity in a shared universe of meaning to bridge everyday life – and the life hereafter.

The role of religious motivation in migrant development engagements – such as those connected with Islamic charity – is relatively under-researched, as opposed to the more established fields of study on religion and migration (Levitt 2003, 2007), or religion and integration (Foner and Alba 2008; Kivisto 2014). Studies on migrant development engagements often focus on *where* and *how*, including organizational dimensions, and on *why* migrants choose to engage (Brinkerhoff 2012; Mercer et al. 2009). Questions about *motivations* are central in the remittances literature, where identifying the degree to which altruism or self-interest is a driving force has been an important quest (Lucas and Stark 1985). Yet, although with some exceptions (such as Bashir 2014; Erdal 2012; Kelly and Solomon 2011; Pollard et al. 2015), studies on remittances rarely explicitly mention religion. Often there is an implicit assumption about ‘ethnic’ motivations to help ‘one’s own’ (Sinatti and Horst 2015) in studies on migrant development engagements. We argue that adopting a lens that puts the religious sphere at the foreground provides a complementary perspective on migrant motivations to engage in development.

Transnational Islamic charity has been studied in the context of development, mainly as part of emergent work on the connections between religion and development (De Cordier 2009; Deneulin and Rakodi 2011; Orji 2011), including studies of

transnational Muslim NGOs (Ozkan 2012; Petersen 2012a, 2012b; Rosenow-Williams and Sezgin 2014). Some authors have explicitly connected it with humanitarian engagement in times of crisis (Benthall 2008; De Cordier 2009). We engage with this literature, and seek to expand existing work by adopting a perspective on ‘lived religion’ and ‘everyday practices’. However, we also acknowledge the potential relevance of transnational social fields.

A study by Page and Mercer (2012) is one of the few explicitly to question the ways in which both academic literature and development policy often base motivations for diaspora development engagement ‘on ideas from economics’ (Page and Mercer 2012: 3). They argue that a focus on what people do – on social practices – and how these become relationally embedded in familial, local and transnational communities would provide a better understanding of migrant development engagements, thus placing the role of ‘the everyday’ in social life at the foreground. They advocate this approach as an alternative to economic theory, which tends either to overlook or to simplify communal and relational dimensions, even when individuals are seen as part of households (Erdal 2012). Our study of Islamic charity as everyday rituals shares this perspective on the importance of everyday social practices as embedded in local as well as transnational communities.

We subscribe to a critical approach to the concept of ‘development’, including the need for attention to ‘whose’ development and on what premises (Raghuram 2009). When we use ‘development’ here, it is as a shorthand for the various attempts to help, improve and assist in which migrants are involved in their countries of origin. The overlap between what in some contexts is labelled ‘Islamic charity’ and in others ‘development’ reveals the need for an inclusive approach to diasporic efforts to help people in need, ‘to pay more attention to everyday life in the diaspora and less to those activities that are labelled as development’ (Page and Mercer 2012: 13). Rather than taking development projects as a starting point, we turn to the broad array of everyday rituals encompassed under the umbrella ‘transnational Islamic charity’.

The study of ‘everyday’ and ‘lived’ religion is gaining prominence, as the everyday religious practices of individuals receive more attention from sociologists of religion (Ammerman 2014; Dessing et al. 2016; McGuire 2008). The religiosity of migrants – perhaps particularly Muslims – has received increasing attention in Europe recently. An emerging body of work discusses ‘Muslim religiosity’, drawing on the notion of everyday lived religion (Berghammer and Fliegenschnee 2014; Dessing et al. 2016). Lived religion includes the ‘material, embodied aspects of religion that occur in everyday life ... [as well as] how people explain themselves. It includes the experiences of the body and the mind’ (Ammerman 2014: 190). A focus on lived religion ‘includes activities that might not immediately be seen as spiritual or religious by outsiders, but are treated as such by the people engaged in them’ (Ammerman 2014: 191). It is important for our analysis of the ways in which people practise Islamic charity as everyday rituals locally and transnationally that the individuals involved in these social practices ascribe religious significance to them.

Everyday rituals in the transnational social field refer ‘not only to more easily identifiable religious rituals, but also to the everyday routinized activities and practices’

(Al-Ali 2002: 250; see also Gardner and Grillo 2002). As Ali-Ali's (2002) analysis of gender relations, transnational ties and rituals among Bosnian refugees indicates, rituals may be religious – or seem to be – but they always intersect with culture and with ongoing negotiations of identity at an individual and collective level. Routinized transnational practices take on ritual meaning, as noted in other studies on migrant transnationalism, with reference to the weekly phone call, the shared celebration of holidays across transnational space, and the return visit itself (Mason 2004; Sagmo 2014). In our study, we acknowledge the significance of the transnational social field as a site for the performance of everyday rituals. We also acknowledge how rituals not only connect the here and now with the hereafter but also create connections across geographic space. The everyday rituals of Islamic charity are located within the transnational life worlds of our research participants, where they take on meaning transnationally, motivating and intersecting with migrant development engagements.

### **Practising Muslims in the Oslo area**

We draw on ethnographic data from the larger Oslo area in Norway, including 35 semi-structured interviews with practising Muslims of Pakistani origin conducted in the period 2012–2014. The data came from a research project on Private Islamic Charity and Approaches to Poverty Reduction, with a main emphasis on Pakistan, including the Pakistani diaspora in Norway. The research participants included individuals who defined themselves as practising Muslims, whom we recruited either on an individual basis, as part of two particular mosque environments (the Minhaj ul Quran and the Islamic Cultural Centre), as part of the Pakistan Development Network, or as part of the multi-ethnic NGO, Rahma Islamic Relief.

The interviewees were of Pakistani origin, both migrants and their descendants born in Norway. The population of people of Pakistani origin in Norway is approximately 38,000 and it is one of the largest non-European ethnic communities in the country. More significantly, it is the largest long-standing community of Muslims. The Pakistani community provided the first purpose-built mosques in Norway and in Oslo. The long-standing diaspora not only sustains transnational ties with Pakistan involving marriages, return visits, house ownership, investments and remittances, but, as in the UK and Denmark (Bolognani 2014; Rytter 2014), it also engages in development within and beyond the family and kinship group. With the maturing of this diaspora population over time, transnational religious practices are undergoing change in post-migration generations (see Aarset 2015 on Quran courses via Skype).

By interviewing people who defined themselves as 'practising Muslims', we were able to gain insight into the roles that Islamic charity can play in motivating development engagements, which in different ways and to different degrees are themselves framed as 'Islamic charity'. We recruited our research participants with a specific view to gathering a varied perspective on the interconnections between transnational Islamic charity and development engagements. For this reason, our findings are likely to be more revealing of the individuals actively engaged with one or both practices, than representative of the broader Pakistani diaspora communities in the Oslo area. We used

our data to analyse what people told us about their motives and practices, bearing in mind that individuals have compound motivations and that the data primarily measure the ways people represent what they do, which is clearly not random.

In our interviews, we combined questions about everyday religious practice and underlying ideals with those on transnational ties and practices, and on engaging in local and transnational humanitarian and development projects. In this article, we focus on how Islamic charity as everyday rituals intersects with and motivates the development engagements of migrants. Other aspects, including the organization of transnational Islamic charity, gendered perspectives, the confluence of remittances and transnational Islamic charity, and the circulation of social remittances are addressed elsewhere (Borchgrevink and Erdal 2015; Borchgrevink and Erdal forthcoming; Erdal and Borchgrevink 2015).

### **Everyday rituals of transnational Islamic charity**

Islamic charity, as everyday rituals, motivates and intersects with diasporic development engagements. We discuss how routinized activities that transcend the divide between mundane everyday life and the afterlife can throw light on transnational Islamic charity. First, we discuss how many Muslims regard their knowledge of Islamic charity principles as an integral part of their universe of meaning. They are well informed about what duties they need to fulfil, and how and on what basis to carry them out. Second, we analyse rituals as connections between the everyday and the eternal. Here, we focus on how one ritual – *qurbani* (ritual slaughter) – provides a meaningful connection between the everyday here and now and the hereafter. Because *qurbani* involves actors in different sites across the transnational social field, it necessarily takes on a particular performativity. Third, we look at the intersections between Islamic charity and development activities. This involves probing the meanings of human actions, and tying ideas about longer term development for social change to principles of Islamic charity. Fourth, we discuss how, by adding a divine actor, Islamic charity connects the everyday with the eternal, thus introducing a new dimension to the usual discussions of diasporic development engagements. The fifth and last dimension pertains to Islamic charity and transnational ties beyond the migrant generation. That transnational ties will weaken over time is a common assumption in relation to post-migration generations. We argue that adding Islamic charity to this discussion brings a new and important perspective to our understanding of how the post-migration generation views diasporic development engagements.

#### *For people and for God: Islamic charity as social and religious obligation*

Islamic teaching gives concrete directions on the giving of charity. Charity, which is both voluntary (such as *sadqa*) and obligatory (such as *zakat*), includes ideals about helping people in need and a perspective on the hereafter. Although all our research participants were practising Muslims, their degree of self-reported religiosity varied. However, there was no doubt that they knew their *zakat* rules, as Nabeel demonstrated:



In the Koran ... you are told how much you should give and who you should give to. ... I don't really remember the order, but I think your relatives come first, then the ones without a father – this can be a family who doesn't have a father and therefore aren't able to sustain themselves – or that they are orphans ... eh ... poor ... people on the road.

Our research participants clearly articulated the Islamic principle of helping those closest to you first, not just through their knowledge of *zakat* rules, but also in the form of helping family and kin in Pakistan, clearly venturing into the territory of what one would usually discuss as remittances (Erdal 2012; Pollard et al. 2015). The everyday rituals of helping family in Pakistan were often simultaneously religious and family based – two dimensions that they saw as highly compatible with each other. However, at times family members in Pakistan would not know that they were in fact receiving *zakat*. Being a *zakat* recipient indicates a position of relative poverty, of being in need, which might be associated with shame (Erdal 2012). Some therefore might perceive the receipt of *zakat* as an insult and, as several of our research participants pointed out, upholding the dignity of the receiver is an obligation. Consequently, giving Islamic charity often requires discretion. It is a duty to give and a right to receive. While receiving remittances in general could be indicative of the same, the religious dimension attached to alms, such as expressions of love or fear of God, generosity or gratitude, or seeking protection in this life or the afterlife, provides another layer of meaning for the sender, as well as for the recipient. Hence, in some cases the migrant perspective was religious, whereas the family member in Pakistan regarded it solely as family-based assistance. Qamar explains that *zakat* is a responsibility for any Muslim, but also adds a diasporic perspective when he explains that 'in terms of the annual *zakat* we have to take that responsibility. Besides that, someone in need of something might call and if we have the money, we have to evaluate our own financial situation as well, but if we have the money we can contribute.'

Migrants and their descendants often get phone calls from family and kin in the country of origin, what Anna Lindley (2009) calls 'the early morning phone call', asking for assistance. Assisting them could be *zakat* or *sadqa*, or a familial obligation not necessarily expressed in religious terms. The literature on remittances notes the compound nature of transnational exchanges (Carling 2014), but in this case also underlines the superficial divide between 'the religious' and everything else in studies of everyday practices across transnational social fields.

For some migrants, regularly putting aside money for *sadqa* and *zakat* was an everyday ritual often responding to needs for assistance in the broader kinship group – paying for education for nephews or nieces, helping cousins establish businesses, or functioning as insurance mechanisms (Mazzucato 2009). As such, there is no need to link these transnational practices, which are common among migrants across the world, to either religious motivations or everyday rituals. However, in our analysis we find a significant overlap in terms of the religious significance ascribed to these practices, in terms of both motivation and the routinized social actions in which meaning and activity, intention and outcome become intertwined. For instance, Aisha's collection

box, which we referred to earlier, is one example of how one might conceptualize migrant transnational Islamic charity – for it often occurs spasmodically throughout the year – as everyday rituals that need not but may overlap diasporic development engagements and familial obligations.

*Qurbani: rituals as eternal and transnational connections*

Maryam describes how the annual sacrifice (*qurbani*), which in Pakistan is usually of a goat, is one occasion when, as a Muslim, you do not need to remember your duty:

Two weeks before *qurbani*, if you walk around Grønland,<sup>5</sup> and in the food stores, you can see advertisement everywhere. You can find a lot of advertisements in Norway, but if not, many give their support through international companies or organizations, like in England. ... What happens is that they have adverts like on TV but the adverts are from stores in England, organizations and everything ... and during Ramadan and the time before *qurbani*, they have a lot of things saying that you can give your *qurbani* here and here.

There are many ways in which *qurbani* can be performed, as the quote illustrates, usually involving either private transfers to family and kin, or transfers through international organizations offering Islamic charity services.

*Qurbani* is perhaps a more archetypal form of *ritual* than the other everyday ones we discuss, in the sense that it offers the explicitly religious and performative dimensions often expected of rituals. Indeed, it conforms to the idea of rituals that Gardner and Grillo (2002: 187) noted in the context of Moroccan migrants' ritual practices within transnational families as 'detachable bundles of practice ... performed partly in one country and partly in another'. Because it is not possible to perform *qurbani* in Norway, it has to be performed elsewhere, as Maryam explained. In addition, because the ritual is a bundle of practices, it requires the involvement of more actors and this strengthens the notion of rituals as communicative. Discussing *qurbani* among our research participants often brought energy to the conversation, for they saw it as something special that demanded extra effort, and there were clear expectations from family members located elsewhere in the transnational social field of conforming and actually performing the ritual.

While happening only once a year, the Muslims we interviewed linked their reflections about *qurbani* to a broader notion of Islamic charity as something that ties together worldly and divine perspectives, not in opposition to one another, but from a complementary perspective. Arguably, in its practical performed nature, ritual animal slaughter is quite detached from the everyday lives of urban Muslims in Europe. However, the particularities and rules of its performance bring to the fore the ways in which, for them, there is a meaningful connection between carrying out this ritual, thus contributing to the fulfilment of their religious duties, and the implications of it, which result in feeding poor people in Pakistan who could otherwise not take part in the sacrificial meal. While one-off meals are clearly no solution to development challenges

in Pakistan, when we place them within our research participants' universe of meaning, we see that these practices extend beyond merely feeding people. Relating to the rituals as meaningful human actions, we argue that the inclusiveness of transcendental perspectives generates the meaning whereby it is significant to enable those excluded from completing the animal sacrifice to take part in the sacrificial meal, thus taking part in the same celebration, sharing the same food, as the rest of their community. As such, the ritualistic aspects of *qurbani*, as meaningful human actions, may be both stylized and conventionalized, and at the same time speak to principles of equality and community. It is worth noting that sales of animal hides for *qurbani*, donated to Islamic charity and development organizations operating in Pakistan, are an important source of funding for these organizations' relief and development activities.

#### *Islamic charity as a sustainable development engagement*

An instrumental reading of Islamic charity as almsgiving in a traditional sense has been criticized as an underlying conception of development for failing to contribute to social change in the sense of 'handing out fish' rather than 'teaching people to fish'. Our research participants' descriptions of the aims and contents of their practices of Islamic charity showed a consistent duality between short-term and long-term perspectives on assistance. They nearly always discussed emergency relief, and particularly the civil war in Syria, in relation to the ensuing refugee crises. However, they also often spoke of long-term development initiatives in terms of sustainability and helping people to help themselves. This suggests that a narrow understanding of Islamic charity as everyday rituals of almsgiving, without concern for longer-term social change, is incorrect. Rather, we observed a spectrum of different types of Islamic charity practices, which included:

- alms-giving (giving money to a beggar on the street);
- familial assistance (paying the hospital bill for a relative);
- emergency relief (sending money to an area struck by a crisis);
- long-term development engagements (such as investing in the education of a relative through a scholarship, or supporting community-based local development projects or a formal development NGO), and
- a one-off development contribution with longer-term benefits (such as building a well in a village).

Our data show a high degree of reflection among those deeply engaged in Islamic charity and who see Islamic charity as intersecting with broader development engagements; some are frustrated with the lack of commitment among others, where paying your *zakat* is simply a religious duty you execute and not much beyond that, with little reflection on long-term development effects. Our research participants were perhaps among those for whom both Islamic charity and diasporic development engagements matter more than average. It was significant to many of them that they were supporting education because 'education is a duty in Islam' and 'it is a duty to help others get education'. In other words, they see supporting education as a way of contributing to

change, both by enabling individual people to help themselves and by contributing to the development of Pakistan in general through a more educated population. Acknowledging the religious dimensions of these everyday rituals of helping is a potentially important avenue for exploring migrants' motivations for engaging in development.

Our research participants showed a substantial interest in education and building wells, namely long-term projects that support sustainability. Some gave their support collectively, through organizations, while others undertook individual ventures. With regard to education, research participants discussed a lot of family-level support, often for distant relatives, and for the children of the servants of relatives, as well as for former neighbours' children in the village. However, there was also significant support for established development organizations that focus on education and sustainable development. One Islamic charity practice that our research participants brought up in discussions on 'sustainability' is *sadqa-e-jariyah*, an institution that provides constant benefits to those in need, such as investments in education, or water provision. Just as *sadqa* gives religious rewards, *sadqa-e-jariya* bestows religious rewards on the giver, so long as the intended beneficiary reaps the benefit of the gift. One of our informants Nabeel describes how:

When I think about a well, that is something which is easy to build and it is something a lot of people can use. ... If someone thinks towards the award that person has contributed towards ... it is said [in Islamic teaching] that if you have helped install a well, and as long as that well is still standing, and as long people are using the well to fetch water, and they drink from that water, you will be rewarded (by God) every single time someone drinks from that water.

The ways in which everyday rituals associated with Islamic charity motivate and intersect with migrant development engagements are of course personal, and often context dependent: if your family and kin are needy, they will be your priority, if not, your priorities will be different. However, our data suggest a high degree of reflection about the nature of engagements. Our research participants evoked Islamic principles about charity, as well as their own perceptions about events in the contemporary world. They emphasized what they saw as a need to invest in long-term sustainable development, as in education, as both individual and organizational initiatives. They saw Islamic teaching as providing practical guidance on when or whom to help, but they adjusted and adapted it to the particular circumstances of the transnational social field. On the one hand, the everyday rituals of Islamic charity support continuity; they reinforce practices such as *zakat*, perhaps as a one-off annual offering or through the routinized practice of putting a little money into a collection box in the home each day. On the other hand, such everyday rituals, seen as communicative and meaningful actions between actors in a transnational social field, contribute towards affecting change. This reflects the function of rituals as essential for societal integration and development, which Durkheim identified in his early work. Here we are thinking for instance of the multiple engagements, in particular with education, including girls' schooling, in which our research participants were involved, and which were discussed in terms of both sustainability and contributing to real societal change (for a discussion on the renegotiation of rituals in migrant contexts, see also Al-Ali 2002).

*Bringing a divine actor into motivations for development engagement*

Islamic charity as religious ideals may be a distinct motivating factor for engagements in emergencies, poverty reduction or development. More often, however, the purely religious motivations and those drawing on humanism overlap. As Safia explained, ‘well, looking at it from a human rights perspective, or from a human perspective, I feel it is a common understanding and that also with our belief as Muslims ... it’s an obligation to support your fellow humans, it’s a duty.’ Ateeq then went on to say how:

Islamic charity is not linked with only giving to Muslims. ... If you look around in the world, you find people from different religions and ethnicity having needs ... and to do things in the right way – I am conscious about giving a set amount to non-Muslims ... because at the end of the day, we are all children of Adam ... and that is what our religion tells us to do.

Religion and humanism combine to inspire the desire of these practising Muslims to help the poor, regardless of where or who they are. However, the presence also of a divine actor not only ensures a better future for the poor, but it also provides for eternity. Shakeel said:

You know, for me personally, as a Muslim, we believe in a life after we die – and you can ask why religion is [necessary]. ... It is here to make sure we do our best for humanity. OK, and God has given me a chance. I have a responsibility for everyone who is weak, in this case I give this and when I die I will be asked this question on judgement day, and then on that day I can say, with my head lifted, OK what I did was in my hands and I tried to do the best I could. This is what motivates me, what I am able to do for humanity, because we have to help when we are able to.

As Shakeel points out, the link with eternity has an obvious role in maintaining Muslims’ focus on the poor, and thus encouraging continued engagements. While a binary distinction between religious and humanistic motivations was not present in our data, we could identify a religious dimension to them, which suggests that looking only for ‘the religious’ is probably a recipe for missing out some of the picture. At the same time, one should of course avoid framing every action made by a believer as religious, for instance in the context of Islamic charity, by drawing in *sadqa* – understood as doing good deeds – as an ever-present injunction.

Our research participants referred to *sadqa* in particular contexts, but often in the sense of an overarching framework to help them remember the eternal perspective in their everyday lives. Migrants’ everyday rituals clearly bound these different dimensions of their universes of meaning together and, by routinizing mundane rituals such as Aisha’s collection box, sending *zakat* money to Pakistan, or performing the rich ritual of *qurbani*, brought the eternal into their everyday lives.

*Adding religion to perspectives on the post-migration generation's transnational ties*

Our data clearly indicate that migrants and their descendants believe that the transnational ties they have with people and places in which there is extreme poverty are a significant factor in their continued engagement with development. Members of the younger generation, in particular, reflecting back on their visits to Pakistan as children and youths, have vivid memories of their personal experience of poverty first hand and of their conversations with their parents about the evident inequality in Pakistani society. Migrants thus draw on both transnational connections and Islamic charity to drive their diasporic engagement with development.

The idea of engaging in development outside one's geographical diasporic homeland is perhaps particularly a 'second generation', or 'first generation Muslim European' (Andersson 2010), phenomenon. These young adults pointed out that, for their parents, there were personal obligations to individuals in the family in Pakistan, whereas this is less and less the case for the next generation. Nevertheless, based on our interactions with highly motivated, young, practising Muslims of Pakistani origin, we find that the difference between the migrant and post-migrant generation is more an openness among the post-migrant generation to contribute beyond Pakistan as well, as opposed to not engaging in Pakistan at all.

Many young Muslims of Pakistani origin are religiously aware and, although their obligational ties to family in Pakistan have weakened with the passage of time, Islamic charity remains a significant transnational practice. Perhaps because of their conscious attitudes, many of our research participants were receiving phone calls with requests for help from cousins in Pakistan, and many were assisting cousins, second cousins, and other kin, not in the same way as their parents, but more than what might have been expected based on purely familial obligations. Such everyday rituals for these young people were often routinized (taking place at specific events, or through regular saving in groups of friends), though not necessarily frequent.

These young people embed their everyday rituals relationally in communications across transnational social fields; the actions themselves communicate a relational as well as a religious meaning, often with direct references to a holistic perspective on living a Muslim life featuring Islamic charity as a key element. It seems then, that Islamic charity intersects with a diasporic sense of engagement, perhaps strengthened by the fact that principles of Islamic charity underline helping those closest to you first, which may suggest a different future for post-migration generations' transnational ties, when religious dimensions are included.

## **Conclusion**

Our analysis highlights the ways in which a sense of duty to engage is present, a duty that underlines the interrelatedness of transnational and eternal connections. This was explicit in the case of *qurbani*, the ritual animal offering, which could only happen through diasporic connections with different geographical places, with a shared goal that entailed several elements, including helping the poor, confirming transnational ties,

and investing in eternal prospects. More implicitly, Islamic ideals and principles contribute towards motivating migrant development engagements not just in terms of duty, but also in relation to the kind of engagement – be it humanitarian relief, sustainable development, investing in educational projects, or building infrastructure. Islamic charity – as an ideal – motivates contributions to longer term sustainable development and has much in common with non-religious humanist ideas. However, there is a distinction, which our research participants brought out by emphasizing the salience over and above the givers and receivers of a third and divine actor. The faith in the existence of a divine actor is of course a prerequisite for the ways in which our research participants grounded their sense of duty towards humanity.

By focusing on Islamic charity and unpacking universes of meaning with an approach that includes religion, we have de-centred family connections in our analysis of transnational ties. Among the young practising Muslims of the post-migration generation, religious duties, Islamic charity, and transnational ties intersected. Their religious obligations became relatively stronger compared with those of their parents, whereas their familial obligations became weaker.

Throughout this article, we have sought to demonstrate that *everyday rituals* can be a useful conceptual tool for grappling with social practices (Al-Ali 2002; Gardner and Grillo 2002). These may be explicitly religious – such as *zakat-ul-fitr* or *qurbani* – but may also be less clearly religious, such as the more mundane acts of giving to charity on a day-to-day basis, as in the case of Aisha's collection box. In studying Islamic charity through the paradigm of lived religion and everyday practices, we do not seek to essentialize 'the religious', yet our findings suggest that studying the ways in which everyday life is – and at once may not be – religious, has the potential of adding insights, also to the study of Muslim religiosity (Ammerman 2014). Hence, only asking about religious practices may in fact conceal some of the interrelatedness, even interchangeability, of different motivations and functions of particular human actions, which a more encompassing perspective allows.

The transnational social field per se does not have to be relevant to the lives and actions of migrants, whether religious or not. Yet, in our analysis of migrant Islamic charity as everyday rituals, we found the transnational context very relevant, with people and places across transnational social fields in Pakistan, the UK, the Gulf states, and other migrant destinations serving as key reference points. These reference points were salient not only in practical performances of everyday rituals, such as phone calls and physical meetings in Pakistan or elsewhere, but also through the shared universe of meaning that religion provides, connecting the everyday scattered across geographical space with an eternal perspective beyond. This deeper meaning of the everyday rituals of Islamic charity relates to what Peggy Levitt (2003: 872–3) describes as 'theologies of change about how to make the world a better place', which shape how people think, as well as how, where, when and for what purpose they choose to act. Thus, the mundane everyday rituals of Islamic charity performed by migrants and their descendants – and other actors across the transnational social field – may simultaneously be understood as desires to contribute to change, including contributing to development in Pakistan, and, through this, making investments with an eternal perspective in mind.

## Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. Eid ul-Adha is an annual Islamic festival involving an animal sacrifice (*qurbani*) to commemorate the Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to offer his son Ismail to God. It concludes the annual pilgrimage (hajj).
3. *Sadqa* is voluntary charity, in contrast to *zakat*, which is obligatory. Our informants often described *sadqa* as 'a good deed', it can be a smile, helping someone, volunteering or donating money.
4. The afterlife, *akhira* in Arabic, and the notion of eternity, or an everlasting world, is central in Islamic eschatology. Many of our informants' thoughts on what motivated their Islamic charity reflect the idea that when you die God will judge your good and bad deeds – thus emphasizing the intention behind your actions – and will decide whether you go to heaven or hell.
5. A multicultural neighbourhood in East-Central Oslo, where most purpose built mosques and many minority shops, including those selling halal food, are located.

## Acknowledgements

This article is based on research within the project 'Private Islamic charity and approaches to poverty reduction', funded by the Research Council of Norway (2011–2015). We are very grateful for the insightful and constructive comments on previous versions of this article provided by Kristian Berg Harpviken, Ingrid Nyborg, Lynn Nygaard, Cindy Horst, participants at the RGS-IBG 2014 session 'Religion in the migration–development nexus?', and the two anonymous reviewers.

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**Article 2**

**With faith in development: Organizing transnational Islamic charity**

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Accepted for publication with *Progress in Development Studies*

**Abstract**

This article examines the different roles religion can play when migrants organize for development. We focus on organizing for development, through transnational Islamic charity, formally and informally, and where religion takes on explicit or implicit roles. By taking Muslims religious practices as starting points, different forms of development engagements are revealed, than if starting with a focus on so-called ‘faith-based organizations’. Whereas religion is often seen instrumentally in development studies, we find that the roles of religion are not only functional, but also substantive and relational. The paper draws on qualitative data collected in Norway, Pakistan and the UK.

**Keywords:** religion; development; diaspora; transnational; Pakistan; Islamic charity

## **Introduction**

The volume of Islamic charity globally has been estimated to be at least 15 times that of total worldwide humanitarian aid (IRIN, 2012). Yet, these flows are largely not included in official aid statistics. Partly, because these are private donations, commonly given with discretion following Islamic teaching, and thus invisible, but arguably also because Islamic charity organizations are situated at the peripheries of international aid.

When Muslims migrate their Islamic charity becomes transnational, as exchanges that would have happened locally, cross borders. As such transnational Islamic charity can overlap and intersect with what elsewhere might be called ‘diaspora development engagements’ (Brinkerhoff, 2012). That migrants contribute to development in their country of origin is well established (de Haas, 2010, Faist, 2008, Nyberg–Sørensen et al., 2002, Van Hear, 2010) and that religion can play a role has been acknowledged (Levitt, 2003, Erdal, 2012, Ozkan, 2012, Rosenow-Williams and Sezgin, 2014). However, which roles, if any, religion plays, needs to be further unpacked, taking on board the criticisms of studies of religion and development being ‘instrumental, narrow and normative’ (Jones and Juul Petersen, 2011). In this article we explore the different roles religion can play when migrants organize for ‘development’.

We focus on ‘transnational Islamic charity’, because the organization thereof, combines the migratory and the religious in an inherent, organic way, which we argue enables seeing the different roles which religion might play in the organization of diaspora development efforts. We understand Islamic charity as religiously framed normative ideals and social practices (Erdal and Borchgrevink, 2017). The Islamic charity we explore takes place within transnational social fields constituted by actors in – and flows between – multiple locations. In these social fields religious ties often overlap with familial, social and political ties. Islamic charity may be organized by development actors including states and large-scale Muslim NGOs, and as smaller-scale, formally and informally organized, initiatives among Muslim and diaspora communities. The large-scale end of this spectrum is by now well-known, with actors such as Muslim Aid and Islamic Relief (Juul Petersen, 2016). Our focus is on the smaller-scale end, which is comprised of private, non-governmental actors, both formal organizations and informal groups.

A range of ‘new development actors’ such as businesses, celebrities, diaspora groups and non-traditional state donors, are seen as becoming salient in development circles (Richey and Ponte, 2014). Transnational Islamic charity is part of this landscape. The interest in such ‘new’ actors in development studies is associated with changing perceptions of

‘development’, but the novelty arguably lies in paying attention to a more diverse set of actors, rather than in the newness of these actors themselves.

Diaspora development engagements, and the ways they are organized, need not involve a role for religion at all; this is an empirical question. Furthermore, ‘religion’, much as ‘culture’, is a poor analytical concept, due to its unruly and highly contextual nature. Nevertheless, we argue that as an umbrella category, religion is an important dimension of social reality, which for that reason merits attention (Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011). In this article we have purposefully selected a case where religion does play a role, so as to analyse how and when religion influences development engagements, impacting substance and ways of organizing.

Charity is part of all religious traditions and figures centrally in the origins of many contemporary aid organizations (Deneulin and Bano, 2009, Haynes, 2007, Bornstein and Redfield, 2011). Within Sunni Islamic traditions<sup>1</sup>, directions for giving charity are described in very concrete terms (Benthall, 1999). Institutions for giving charity are detailed in the Quran: the obligation to give *zakat* (the religious tax, often counted as 2.5 % of one’s annual surplus), voluntary alms (*sadqa*), religious endowment (*waqf*), and religious sacrifice (*qurbani*). Islamic teachings give directions about worthy recipients of charity and encouraged activities (such as helping widows and orphans, or supporting education). Simultaneously, there is a religious obligation to support those closest to you first – starting with your family, then your neighbour, the global Muslim community of believers (the *umma*) and humanity – creating what can be visualised as concentric circles of responsibility. Migrants continue to give annual *zakat* and other voluntary alms and therefore ‘transnational Islamic charity’ overlaps with what in other contexts might be described as ‘development aid’: at the level of ideals, e.g. social justice through re-distribution and humanitarianism, but also at the level of practical efforts, e.g. supporting education or improving livelihood opportunities.

In the next section we outline our conceptual approach to the organization of transnational Islamic charity. This is followed by analysis of the ways Islamic charity is organized in the transnational social field spanning Oslo, London and Pakistani Punjab, with a focus on five distinct arenas: mosques, women’s Quran study groups, transnational

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<sup>1</sup>In both Pakistan and Norway the majority of the Muslim population is Sunni (85-90%) and the minority Shia (10-15) (Linge, 2016, Vogt, 2008). Shia practices are not included in this study.

religious organizations, Muslim Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and diaspora development organizations.

### **Transnational Islamic charity and development**

In addressing the question of how transnational Islamic charity is organized, and what roles religion plays, we combine insights from two sets of literature: a strand of development research that focuses on religion in development, and the literature on organized diaspora development engagements within migration studies. In development studies, there has been a renewed interest in the role of religion – including faith-based organizations (FBOs) - over the last decade (ter Haar, 2011, Jennings and Clarke, 2008). This literature has been criticised for an overly narrow understanding of development: ‘based on normative assumptions about how both religion and development are conceptualised: religion is understood to be apart from ‘mainstream development’, while development is defined as that thing that development agencies do’ (Jones and Juul Petersen, 2011). Simultaneously, migrants’ development engagements have been increasingly discussed in migrant-receiving countries, and internationally the interest in facilitating diaspora development initiatives has grown, but with a similar assumption, that what migrants do ought to contribute to ‘development’ narrowly defined (Sinatti and Horst, 2014). While development can be used as a broad concept to denote improvement of the current condition – or positive societal change - it is commonly used in a much more narrow sense to refer to planned activities of professional development actors (Horst and Sinatti, 2014). Arguably, the contemporary call for diaspora engagement is rooted in a rather limited definition of development where migrants are cast as ‘development actors’ within a predefined development script (Raghuram, 2009; Sinatti and Horst, 2014), defined by ‘the ideas and world of development aid as a distinct area of practice, conducted by development organizations staffed by development professionals, and often informed by academics engaged in development studies’ (Bakewell 2008:1342–3). Drawing on these critical perspectives, we include in our understanding of development not only those practices that are explicitly framed in the language of mainstream development, but a range of activities that in different ways are aimed at reducing poverty and aiding people in need, including those that are conventionally categorised as humanitarian.

Studies of religion in development have commonly focused on FBOs, and until recently almost exclusively on Christian FBOs from the Global North, aiding people in the Global South (Clarke, 2008). In this literature FBOs are commonly understood as faith-

based development organizations or NGOs. This reflects a more general tendency to view religion instrumentally, as being either an obstacle or a catalyst for development. Although a number of typologies of FBOs (Clarke, 2008, Bradley, 2009), some in contrast to NGOs (Clarke and Ware, 2015), have been developed studies have ‘lumped together a wide variety of organizations – large and small, volunteer and professional, local and international – under the heading of “faith-based organization”’, often hiding more than it reveals about the *role* of religion in development (Jones and Juul Petersen, 2011: 1298). In our study we seek to discern the different roles religion may play not only in formal FBOs, but in a range of organizational forms in which Islamic charity and diasporic development engagements intersect.

There are few studies examining the role of religion in engagement for relief and development in informal organizations, or the role of religion within organizations that are not explicitly ‘faith-based’. This is reflective of a broader trend in development studies, where first NGOs, and now FBOs, tend to be studied as closed entities, disconnected from their contexts. NGOs, for example, are frequently analysed without taking into account the ‘institutional and social structures of which they [NGOs] are part and which are frequently transnational in nature’ (Bebbington, 2004: 729). Arguably, there is a need for seeing development actors - informal networks or formal organizations – in their particular social, political and historical contexts (Bebbington, 2004, Hilhorst, 2003, Mosse, 2013, Juul Petersen, 2016), and to focus on ‘actually existing civil society’ (Mohan, 2002).

Migrants have always organized in order to contribute to their regions of origin, beyond the family sphere, connecting diaspora and origin communities across transnational social fields (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Collective diaspora contributions to development, whether through formal organizations or loose networks, are often discussed as ‘diaspora development engagements’ (Brinkerhoff, 2012, Sinatti and Horst, 2014), or as ‘collective remittances’ (Goldring, 2004). The uniting principle can be kinship or religion, shared place of origin, or a combination of these. Despite ethnographers’ knowledge about the importance of religion as institutions, communities, belief and practice, few studies of migrants’ development engagement explicitly foreground the roles of religion. Thus there are shared limitations to literatures in development and migration studies, in adopting a narrow and instrumental view of both ‘religion’ and ‘development’. Building on emergent work within development studies, shifting the focus to how faith influences development and how people conceive of and practice development, (Freeman, 2012; Juul Petersen, 2016), we analyse the different roles religion can play when migrants organize for development.

Inspired by Clarke's analysis of relations between donors and FBOs, where he distinguishes between 'deployment of faith' as 'active' or 'passive' (Clarke, 2008, p. 32), we find it useful to think in terms of *explicit* versus *implicit* roles of religion. In Clarke's typology an 'active deployment of faith' places faith before humanitarian objectives, while a 'passive deployment of faith' designates faith as subsidiary to broader humanitarian objectives (2008, p. 32). For the purpose of analysis of transnational Islamic charity and diaspora development engagements, we use explicit roles of religion to refer to cases where engagement is expressed and given meaning primarily in religious terms, using religious language, symbols and authority (Lister, 2003). Implicit roles refer to cases where engagement is primarily expressed in development terms, but where faith plays a role in motivating, mobilising and giving direction to what is done and when it takes place. Whether the role of religion is implicit or explicit may be conscious or unconscious, and depends on context. An organization may use a 'development frame' – using the language, symbols and authority from development - when seeking support from a mainstream development donor, and a 'religious frame' when raising funds in a mosque, or a church.

Focusing on how transnational Islamic charity is organized, the potential relevance of transnational ties is a given. The transnational dimension, manifests itself as flows of money, people and ideas, and structurally, in how Islamic charity is organized. In order to approach the question empirically, we adopt a transnational optic (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007), which allows us to see the circulation of ideas and practices as constantly 'on the move' (Levitt, 2013). Islamic charity involves intricate networks of resource flows, but also networks of power and of personal and contractual relationships (Bebbington, 2004), in which the local and transnational intersect.

Our analysis of organizing transnational Islamic charity focuses on the relative roles of organizing modes (formal – informal) and the role of religion (explicit – implicit) as illustrated by figure 1, through which we also explore the nature and role of the 'transnational' for organizing transnational Islamic charity. In figure 1 we illustrate our way of thinking about dimensions of transnational organized Islamic charity in a four-fold typology. As with all typologies, this typology only captures parts of the picture. Focusing on the implicit – explicit role of religion and the formal- informal modes of organizing, it does not attempt to assess whether development the migrants do are good or not (which would involve a normative position on what constitutes improvement), nor how recipients view the assistance provided, and the role of religion in this.



**Figure 1: Dimensions of organized transnational Islamic charity**

	Formal structure (organization)	Informal structure (network)
Explicit role of religion		
Implicit role of religion		

**Exploring the organization of transnational Islamic charity**

In order to study transnational Islamic charity, we selected two mosques as entry points into the ‘Islamic charity sector’ among the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo: the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) and the Idara Minhaj-ul-Quran. These are two large and well-established congregations with transnational ties to Pakistan. We also included a multi-ethnic, Muslim NGO, Rahma Islamic Relief, and the Pakistan Development Network, an umbrella for a range of organizations and looser networks engaged in development in migrants’ regions of origin. We recruited research participants through people associated with these mosques and organizations in Oslo, and transnational connections were traced to Pakistani Punjab, where interviews, field site visits and organization visits were conducted. Then, tracing transnational connections to London, two key informant interviews there complement the data collected in Norway and Pakistan. We thus adopted a step-wise, multi-sited approach (Falzon, 2009, Horst, 2009), tracing interpersonal and institutional, formal and informal charity and development practices and networks back and forth between sites in Oslo, Punjab and London. The data for this article includes 76 semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, field visits to offices and project sites, and organizational documents (2012–2015). Overall, we conducted 36 interviews with women and 40 with men, reflective of the formal organized side of transnational Islamic charity, where men are more prominent, especially in formal positions. Therefore women’s groups and organizations were also purposefully included, in order to contribute to a more gender-balanced sample, allowing us to explore women’s involvement in transnational Islamic charity explicitly. The data this paper builds on was collected as part of a larger project examining the relationship between

Islamic charity and development (see also Borchgrevink and Erdal, 2017, Erdal and Borchgrevink 2017).

In our study, 'Islamic charity' is defined by how our informants themselves ascribe religious significance to their social practices. We draw on people's own narratives and reflections about their practices, as individuals and as actors making up organizations.

### **Arenas of transnational Islamic charity**

The Pakistani diaspora in Oslo is part of a long-standing transnational social field spanning Punjab, Oslo, London and multiple other locations, particularly in the Gulf and Middle East (Bolognani and Lyon, 2011, Kalra, 2009, Erdal, 2013). Starting with labour migration in the late 1960s, Punjab has been the primary region of emigration of Pakistanis to Norway. As time has passed diverse transnational familial, social, economic and political ties, have developed including religious ties to people, organizations and places in Pakistan. The majority of Pakistani migrants and their descendants in Oslo are Sunni, and are members of mosques linked to different schools of thought in Pakistan (Vogt, 2008). The Pakistani diaspora in Oslo's transnational ties with Pakistan includes remittance-sending to family-members, relatives and others in communities of origin (Erdal, 2012), as well as more organized diaspora-development efforts (Erdal, 2015), thus spanning social and familial, economic and political, as well as religious fields of interaction. In the Pakistani diaspora in Norway Islamic charity is organized informally in networks around mosques, Quran study groups and formal religious organizations, but also in networks rooted in common place of origin. Islamic charity is also organized by formal transnational religious organizations, some with headquarters in Pakistan, or in European countries, or through locally based Muslim NGOs in Oslo, with partner organizations in diaspora-origin countries. Many small organizations focus on development in migrants' places of origin, based on informal networks of friendship or social, political and religious ties. As such migrants' national origins, and engagements in former home-places within a particular nation-state, Pakistan in this case, are connected with religious dimension, as Islamic charity intersects with migrants' familial obligations, and their desire to contribute to development in Pakistan. By and large, these are dimensions which intersect, and which are hard to disentangle in individual's accounts. Nevertheless, it is simultaneously clear that a sense of obligation towards Pakistan, need not entail trust in the Pakistani state; furthermore, an obligation to contribute in Pakistan, need not entail contributing less to the Norwegian society. We discuss five arenas,

providing analysis of the ways in which transnational Islamic charity is organized, and the roles which religion plays.

### *Mosques*

Mosques play an important role in organizing Islamic charity: as physical venues, meeting places, and centers of religious teaching and practice. The Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) is the oldest (established 1974) and one of the largest mosques in Oslo (some 4000 members). The mosque was, and still remains, predominantly Pakistani. It is independent, but has since its inception had sympathisers of the Jamaat-e-Islami among its members, recruiting imams sympathetic to the thoughts of Mawlana Maududi, the main ideologue and founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan's largest religio-political party (Nasr, 1994).

The ICC does not have a charity organization, but facilitates the organization of Islamic charity – such as zakat, zakat-ul-fitr (a small obligatory donation given before the Eid-prayers), and qurbani – through, among others, the Al Khidmat Foundation in Pakistan, which is the largest social welfare, relief and development organization associated with Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami has an extensive set of welfare, development and relief organizations in Pakistan, which raise significant amounts from the Pakistani diaspora around the world.

Religious obligations, such as zakat-ul-fitr are organized through transnational networks, such as when the ICC sends money donated through the Al Khidmat Foundation in Pakistan, where they can advance the money and distribute it to the poor at the appropriate time, without waiting for it to be transferred through the bank.

The ICC mosque hosts fundraising for Pakistan-based organizations in the network of Jamaat-e-Islami that conduct annual tours of Europe to raise funds for projects in Pakistan. Other organizations and ad-hoc initiatives use the mosque to mobilise resources for initiatives in Pakistan, in Syria or Gaza, or in Oslo; reflecting diasporic ties, but also Muslim solidarities and broader humanitarian ideals. Notably, among post-migrant generation Muslims, the charitable ties to the diasporic homeland remain, but a broader humanitarian attention to other contexts is stronger (Erdal and Borchgrevink, 2017).

The Islamic calendar creates a natural rhythm for activities, as prescribed alms and ritual offerings adhere to specific performance, at specific times, and for specified recipient groups. Here mosques act as intermediaries of Islamic charity, and simultaneously for migrants' contributions to relief and development initiatives in places of origin and beyond.

The organization of both formal and informal Islamic charity takes advantage of the mosque's existing organizational structure. As a place of worship and as a community centre, the mosque is a gender-segregated arena. While formal positions in the mosque (management and board), as well as the formal organizational duties for Islamic charity are male dominated, the mosque serves as a venue for organizing Islamic charity for both women and men.

The role of religion in mosques is given, and thus explicit. The politico-religious dimensions in the case of the ICC, are more implicit, and come to the fore only through the choices of charitable organizations that are supported or allowed to raise funds in the mosque. Mosques organization of charitable efforts are transnational in the way these are organized by people located both here and there. Furthermore, recipients of charity are largely located in other locations within the transnational social field, most notably in Pakistan.

#### *Women's Quran study groups*

Among the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo there are several informal women's groups based around religious teaching and spiritual practice. These women's Quran study groups are an example of how Islamic charity is organized through informal networks, groups who organize collection of alms for development purposes on a regular basis.

In the suburbs of Oslo, one such group of women meets every month for a spiritual gathering. Some 15–20 women meet to pray together, to socialise and to collect money for charity. Giving charity is seen as an obligation and explained as an integral part of their religious practice. As Merium<sup>2</sup> told us: 'If God has given you something, God expects you to share that with those that don't have. If you have good health, time at your hand... part of that belongs to the poor'.

The women send a basket around to collect donations at each meeting. Once a year they arrange a 'meena bazar' for charity, inviting female family and friends for a day of fun, food and fundraising. Homemade food and used clothes, jewelry and toys are put up for sale. The money they collect during the year is donated to an orphanage run by the Minhaj Welfare Foundation in Pakistan. Rather than donating through Minhaj Welfare Norway, the leader of the group hand-carries the money, and donates it in person to the manager of the orphanage when she visits family in Pakistan. The leader of the group is a member of Minhaj-ul-Quran, but other members attend different mosques. The women want to work

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<sup>2</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

independently, Mahmooda told us: ‘We do it for the poor (...) we are not directed by an organization’.

In these informal networks there are women who have migrated to Norway as adults and who sustain close relationships with friends and family in Pakistan; women who were born in Norway and usually have less frequent contact with Pakistan; and women who have returned to Pakistan and keep in touch with those in Norway. Talking about the charity work of his wife, Aqeel who had recently moved to Pakistan with his family from Norway told us: ‘there was a school in [place in Pakistan]... for girls of families who don’t have money to send their girls to school [...] and they needed two rooms [...] they told my wife: “help us so we can get started” ... she picked up the phone and talked to friends in Norway, and asked them to help’.

We interviewed a diverse group of women. Some worked or studied; others were housewives or retired. However, all contributed substantial amounts of their monthly income to people in need, primarily women and children in Pakistan. One of the groups we talked to has switched from regularly sending smaller amounts to individuals in need to bigger investments, such as investing 200 000 NOK<sup>3</sup> to buy a school building with a long-term commitment to pay the school’s running expenses.

Women’s Quran study groups are examples of informally organized Islamic charity, where faith has an explicit role. These groups are not formally associated with particular religious organizations or mosques, but are often informally linked with religious networks, both in Norway and transnationally. The organizing of Islamic charity happens through personal and informal channels, not through the structures of existing transnational Muslim NGOs, although there are intersections. The role of religion is explicit: it motivates and structures what they support, including in relation to the Islamic charity. The charity practices of these women are distinctly gendered, both in how they are organized (gender-segregated) and the purposes for which funds are collected (to support widows, education for girls). The fact that money is not channelled through the formal organizations operating in Norway, but rather hand-carried to Pakistan, could be ascribed to particular power hierarchies and interpersonal relationships vis-a-vis which these women actively position themselves.

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<sup>3</sup> Equivalent to approx. 28,000 USD in 2014.

*Transnational religious organizations*

Minhaj-ul-Quran Norway is a branch of the Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI), a transnational religious organization founded by Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri in Pakistan in 1980, established in Norway in 1989. It has become one of the major mosques in Oslo (with some 3000 members), and one of few that are formally part of a transnational religious organization. Within MQI, a separate organization, the Minhaj Welfare Foundation (MWF), deals specifically with welfare, relief and development. As in other diaspora countries, MWF has a branch in Norway, the Minhaj Welfare Norway. The MWF has a number of large projects (in education, provision of clean water, orphan support) funded primarily by its members and sympathisers in Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora, and a media set-up through which it mobilises members and raises funds for relief and development.

Minhaj Welfare Norway organizes its Islamic charity activities under the umbrella of its mother organization, with flows of information about activities moving from both Lahore and London to Oslo. Across the MQI both women and men are actively engaged in charity and development work, through gender-segregated organizations (Borchgrevink and Erdal, 2015). As such, the MWF is an all-male organization. The Minhaj Women League, the MQI women's wing, collaborates with MWF both in Pakistan and the diaspora. The women's organization is considered crucial in mobilising resources, often organizing charity bazars and other collections in conjunction with religious gatherings.

The welfare work of MQI started with distribution of charity and community welfare in Pakistan. Over the past decade, MWF has transformed from a community welfare scheme to present itself as a 'worldwide humanitarian development organisation', which in the UK context compares itself to organizations such as Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid. In Oslo, the organization functions mainly as a funding branch. Activities are focused around the movement's mosques, and as such are similar to many of the other mosque-based Islamic charity activities, with a key difference lying in the association with a transnational religious organization, where Islamic charity is integral to the movement's core mission.

The MWF is an example of a formal organization where the role of religion is explicit. It can be seen as the *raison d'être* of the organization, and guides its organizational focus and operation. As part of a religious organization one of MWF's primary tasks is to collect and distribute charity on behalf of its members, such as qurbani, zakat and sadqa. The organization is fundamentally transnational in its structure, with frequent flows of human, economic and intellectual resources between different sites in the network.

*Muslim NGOs*

In contrast to MWF, Rahma Islamic Relief presents itself as a relief and development NGO. Rahma draws on teaching about Islamic charity for membership and fundraising. One of the founders explained how the decision to name Rahma ('mercy' in Arabic) explicitly as an Islamic organization had not been a simple one:

We had very long discussion about what to call the organization. To call it Rahma Islamic Relief was a (...) strategic decision. It gives us an identity different to other organizations. It was a natural name, as our channels were the mosques. (...) The mosques were our entry-point. We send letters to mosques and ask if they can collect money for us for certain campaigns. Some say yes, some say no. We don't belong to a specific mosque. We wanted to attract as many Muslims as possible, so it was natural. But we support people irrespective of religion. We supported Japan after the catastrophe, and also Ethiopia.

While established by Muslims, the volunteers emphasize the inspiration from both Islamic teaching and broader humanitarian values. Rahma adopted a conscious strategy to mobilise people from diverse backgrounds, particularly youth. It also have members and supporters who are non-Muslims. Many youth who are active in the Islamic Cultural Centre, or in the Minhaj-ul-Quran, also support Rahma. Being the only well-established Muslim NGO explicitly not aligning with particular ethnic or national migrant groups, Rahma holds a unique position in the Norwegian context. Rahma include both men and women in the organization's board and project management. Young women constitute a significant part of Rahma's supporters, and female volunteers have initiated fundraising events for women only.

Rahma is an example of a formal organization where religion has an explicit role, shaping not only the focus of project activities, but also organizational structures. In contrast to the MWF, Rahma presents itself first and foremost as a humanitarian aid and development organization, but one operating within an Islamic framework. It is funded by individual's Islamic charity (zakat and sadqa), but also receives institutional donor funding from Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). Religion is central when Rahma volunteers talk about their activities, whether linked explicitly to the distribution of Ramadan meals for the poor, or more generally in adopting aid efforts which are compatible with the criteria for the use of zakat and sadqa, including volunteering for the organization itself seen as a form of sadqa. The organization is run by volunteers, and operates on a 'zero-cost principle', where all the religious donations the organization receives (e.g. zakat, sadqa) goes

directly to the activities they are intended for (e.g. food-aid, education, or water wells). Administrative costs are borne by the members themselves or by institutional funders like the Norad.

Beginning with smaller projects in the home countries of its founders, Rahma has developed into a formal NGO with project-based partnership with sister-organizations in a number of countries. The example of Rahma illustrates the ways in which migrants' Islamic charity may evolve over time, as descendants are born, and transnational ties to home places change, and where Muslim identities across national or ethnic divides may flourish.

#### *Diaspora development organizations*

Al Falah Norway is one of many organizations run by individuals in the Pakistani diaspora in Oslo that are working with development in Pakistan. It is part of the Pakistan Development Network (PDN), an umbrella organization founded following a pilot project on co-development initiated by the Norwegian government in 2009 (Erdal, 2015). Al Falah Norway was established in the 2000s, as a sister-organization to Al Falah Scholarship Scheme in Pakistan, an organization that provides scholarships to poor students. Al Falah Scholarship Scheme was established when the founder returned to Pakistan after decades working in the US, as his way of contributing to development in his home place. The founder of Al Falah is a member of the board of Al Khidmat Foundation (the aid organization associated with Jamaat-e-Islami), and Al Falah is a partner of Al Khidmat Foundation. Mobilising resources, Al Falah Scholarship Scheme utilises an extensive network in the Pakistani diaspora around Europe, the US and in the Gulf States.

Al Falah Norway has no formal links to any mosque or religious organization, and presents itself as a development organization. Being part of the pilot project on co-development, Al Falah also received funding from Norad, and participated in capacity building courses and workshops on topics considered central to mainstream development management (e.g. on 'basic understanding of development' and 'project management') (Erdal, 2015).

Al Falah and other organizations in the PDN relate both to traditions of Islamic charity and to the international development sector. Several of the diaspora development organizations have a particular focus on women in their projects, and emphasise the importance of girls' education and women's health. Such organizations frame their focus on women with reference to internationally established norms on gender equality, which are



central to official Norwegian development strategies and a requirement for development partnership (Selbervik & Østebø, 2013).

The importance of helping women and children, particularly widows and orphans, is also highlighted in Islamic tradition, and is a common focus of Islamic charity (Juul Petersen, 2012). Many of those we talked to in the PDN emphasized how there is no conflict between sustainable development goals and Islamic charity. The formal diaspora development organizations are male dominated arenas. There are only women on some boards, but women play a key role in fundraising.

While many diaspora development organizations are formal, such as the member organizations of the PDN, the example of Al Falah reveals that formal organizations can be part of networks that are religio-ideological, but also based on home place and kinship, and that these can intersect. This exposes the need to look past the formal organizational structures in order to better understand how transnational Islamic charity is organized and the role of religion in this.

Diaspora development organizations – established with the purpose of contributing to development in the country of origin – commonly involve transnational transactions, but in different ways. Some manage activities from Oslo, with sister-organizations implementing projects in Pakistan, while others function like Norwegian fundraising branches of Pakistani organizations. Transnational interactions are frequent, and while some organizations are one-man shops, drawing on social networks, most formal diaspora development organizations operate with formal contractual relationships.

These organizations commonly present themselves in the language of international development. Yet, similar to the other arenas discussed above, religion appears significant, where the time and place of fundraising initiatives tied to the Islamic calendar. The implicit role of religion can be seen both as a motivational factor for the individuals involved and as a structuring factor for what kinds of resources are mobilised, for how they are mobilized, and for the types of activities funded. As such, the line between what is and is not ‘faith-based’ becomes blurred.

### **Typologising the organization of Islamic charity**

Different Islamic charity networks and organizations can be placed differently in relation to the two axes of Figure 1 (page 6). Below we discuss these four-way relationships in greater detail.

*Formal organization - explicit religion*

The transnational religious organization MWF and the Muslim NGO Rahma are both formally registered organizations for which faith has an explicit role. However, the two examples are contrasting, one key difference being that MWF is a transnational religious movement founded in Pakistan, whose main aims are religious, whereas Rahma is a humanitarian and development NGO founded by migrants and descendants of multiple origins in Norway, whose main purpose is humanitarian. While different in roots and purpose, the two organizations are similar in how they organize Islamic charity in the diaspora, where campaigns and volunteering are significant, and the Islamic calendar is important. The contrast between Rahma and MWF highlights different forms transnationalism can take in the context of Islamic charity in the diaspora, with flows of decisions, people and money occurring in both organizations, but with the main organizational authority located in different sites in the transnational social field. These contrasting cases underline the differing role faith plays in such organizations: as *raison d'être* for MWF; as uniting principle with Rahma.

*Informal organization – explicit religion*

Many diaspora activities take place outside of formal organizations. The women in the Quran study groups are an example of informal organizing in which religion has an explicit role. The women in these groups seek inspiration in religious teachings and view their charity as an integral part of their religious practice. Religious ideals are considered more important than humanitarian principles, or these are seen as overlapping. Helping people in need is often conceived as a religious obligation, and framed in religious terms with reference to religious doctrine and authority. Transnational interactions can be regular or ad-hoc, responding to needs of particular individuals or to concrete humanitarian situations, but are commonly informal, based on personal rather than contractual relationships.

*Formal organization - implicit religion*

The diaspora development organizations, such as Al Falah Norway, are examples of formal organizations where religion has an implicit role. In these organizations, we found that faith is a motivational factor at the personal level among the individuals involved, but that religion also has a structuring role. The role of religion is implicit, and in the way the organizations present themselves, for example to development donors (such as Norad), often secondary to broader humanitarian principles and 'secular' development ideals. Being a transnational organization, however, the role of religion is more explicit in the Pakistani part of the

organization, indicating the relevance of context. Our focus on transnational Islamic charity brings attention to diaspora development engagements that in one way or another relate to religion, and is thus not reflective of all diaspora development engagements, such as those where religion plays no role. However, we found that even when enquiring into the role of religion among the diaspora development organizations that do not present themselves as ‘faith-based’, religion emerges as significant: as motivation for individuals’ engagement (volunteering), for funding (religious alms being a significant funding source) and for when and where organizations fundraise (in relation to the Islamic calendar, in mosques). Analysing the role of religion in formal organizations that are not explicitly ‘faith-based’, reveals how religion can play both implicit and explicit roles, and how making clear cut divides points to the limitations of the term ‘faith-based organizations’.

#### *Informal organization - implicit religion*

The informal organizing of Islamic charity, where religion has an implicit role, is for obvious reasons less publicly visible than that of formal organizations. In our interviews, however, we found that informal organizing of Islamic charity is relatively common, for instance in response to a person in need, where money is collected among friends without any explicit reference to religion, but where faith still is a motivational factor. Among our research participants we had examples of initiatives, informally organized by one or more individuals, where the implicit role of religion as a motivation for giving – sadqa, or around Eid for instance, as a period of giving – were shared. Such initiatives were often one-off projects, with no expectations of sustainability over time. Informal initiatives where religion has an implicit role, shed light on migrants engagement for development, that can be invisible from the outside, yet of great significance to the individuals involved, and where the roles of religion may also be substantial (Erdal and Borchgrevink, 2017).

#### **Conclusion**

In this article we have examined the organizing of transnational Islamic charity to unpack the roles of religion in a migration and development context. We operationalized this by distinguishing modes of organizing (formal – informal) and the role of religion (explicit – implicit) in the organization of transnational Islamic charity. We find that this has opened for a more nuanced, contextual analysis, which extends beyond an instrumental vision of religion as contributing or detracting to ‘development’; which engages with religion in a broad sense, and which does not take on a normative stance in relation to the roles of religion (cf. Jones and Juul Petersen, 2011).

Returning to the overarching question of the different roles which religion might take on in organizing migrant development efforts, beyond the question of formal/informal organizing principles and the explicit/implicit roles of religion, we find that religion may be instrumental, structuring and motivating, roles, but also substantive and relational ones. In our analysis we find that religion structures migrants' development engagements in terms of funding sources (e.g. the zakat, sadqa, qurbani) and arenas (e.g. mosques, religious gatherings and Eid celebrations). Our analysis has brought out how religion can function as organizations' *raison d'être* in religious movements, or as a uniting principle among individuals with otherwise different background, and as motivations for engagement both at individual and organizational levels.

We have also found that religion take on substantive role influencing migrants development engagements in terms of approaches, activities and recipients of assistance. Approaches include both charity-oriented, short-term efforts (e.g. distribution of food) to welfare and development-oriented approaches (e.g. provision of education and income earning opportunities). Evident in the cases above, most actors are engaged both in activities that aim at short-term relief and activities that aim at longer-term sustainable impacts.

A transnational perspective reveals the relational aspects of religion. We have found that Islamic charity and diaspora development engagements overlap in the transnational social field spanning Oslo, Punjab and elsewhere, and how transnational religious ties between, for example, mosques or transnational religious organizations often intersect with other transnational ties related to kin, and to social and political networks. Exploring transnational dimensions also brings out issues of power and authority.

Acknowledging the social reality of transnationalism encourages attentiveness to the multiple actors involved, in different geographic locations, in differing power-relations with each other, entailing different directionalities of flows and exchanges (Borchgrevink and Erdal, 2017). The locations of an organizing arena vis-a-vis different sources of authority – such as that related to professional development authority, on the one hand, and the authority of religious actors and institutions, on the other, appear as significant for the role of religion in the organizing of transnational Islamic charity, and merits further research. By contrast, perhaps, we find that the roles of states as actors are relatively invisible in our data, in both the Norwegian and Pakistani contexts, besides the backdrop of regulatory frameworks.

Using Muslims' charitable practices as an entry point allows the inclusion of actors often not conceived as development actors, such as women's Quran study groups. When the focus is limited to formal organizations such as NGOs or FBOs, particularly women, who

commonly organize transnational Islamic charity in informal networks, are not counted, and we miss significant gender dimensions in the organization of Islamic charity. As substantial proportions of transnational Islamic charity activities are organized informally, which an entry point starting from religious practices allows seeing. We argue that it is necessary to include informal ways of organizing for development in the analysis to get insight into the diverse ways Islamic charity and development intersects, as well as about how these are gendered (see also Borchgrevink and Erdal, 2015).

Our informants, and the organizations they were a part of, on the one hand, were to a limited extent ‘development actors’ in any traditional sense, on the other hand they expressed, quite literally, ‘faith in development’. An approach which expands conceptions of diaspora development engagement, acknowledging initiatives that are different from what ‘development organizations do’, is necessary in order to capture the diversity of initiatives that migrants’ engage in – such as the activities associated with transnational Islamic charity. In this article, we have argued that transnational Islamic charity overlaps with what elsewhere could be termed diaspora development engagement. If what is counted as ‘development engagements’ remains confined to a narrow understanding of ‘development’, substantial segments of migrants development engagement, such as those related to transnational Islamic charity, remain largely invisible and unaccounted for. We find that a perspective which foregrounds religion, in its diverse articulations, adds valuable insights to the ways in which we understand diaspora contributions to development.

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### Article 3

#### **Agents of change? Women's religious activism and development work in Pakistan**

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Submitted to *Religion and Gender*

#### **Abstract**

This article examines the intersection of religion, gender and development through an analysis of religious practice and development engagement among women activists in two religio-political aid organizations in Pakistan. Drawing on qualitative data from Pakistan (2012–2015), I examine how religion influences these women's conceptions and practices of development, and how these are gendered. Situated in religio-political movements advancing gender ideologies based on gender complementarity and segregation, religion and gender shape women's development engagements in substantial ways: it influence what they do and how they do it. A close read of women's discourse and practice, however, reveals that gender ideologies are not fixed but negotiated by women activists. Balancing ideology and pragmatism, the women interpret and appropriate Islamic teachings, local cultural practices, and global norms in their local contexts. In negotiating which norms and practices to uphold and which ones to resist, the women activist can be seen as active agents of change.

**Keywords:** gender; religion; Islam; development; Pakistan

## Introduction

Pakistan, as in many Muslim majority societies, has a long history and widespread practice of giving to charity within the framework of Islam, and a diversity of welfare and development organizations related to Islamic charity. Women play important roles in connection with charity taking place in the domestic arena, through family and other social networks. They also are significant actors in formal welfare and development organizations, which unlike the political sphere, has been an acceptable public arena for women's activism for some time (Jamal, 2013).

The Al Khidmat Women Trust (AKWT) and the Minhaj Women League (MWL) – the two organizations in this study – are religio-political women's organizations concerned with the objectives of assisting women in need and improving their position in society. On the surface, they are not unlike other women-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Pakistan and elsewhere. However, the AKWT and the MWL do not have an explicit goal of advancing women's rights and gender equality in all spheres of life. Instead, the women in these organizations identify with religio-political movements<sup>4</sup> advancing patriarchal gender ideologies based on difference and complementarity, in which men and women are seen as being equal in worth but as having different and complementary roles, rights, and duties.

Defining themselves in opposition to principles of gender equality and women's rights held high in mainstream gender and development discourse and practice, these women activists are rarely considered 'agents of change' or studied as actors in development. Rather, the participation of women in conservative religion is often presented as a paradox: posing questions of why women join religious organizations which subjugate them to patriarchal domination (Ben Shitrit, 2013; Iqtidar, 2011). A number of scholars have investigated why so many women become part of religio-political movements that advocate patriarchal gender roles which constrain women's actions and choices, in the context of Pakistan (Ahmad, 2009; Iqtidar, 2011; Jamal, 2013;) and in the Middle East (Clarke, 2004; Deeb, 2011; Mahmood, 2005; White, 2011). This literature reveals an increased focus on the role of Muslim women in politics in recent years, and studies have found that women in 'Islamist'<sup>5</sup> - or what I term 'religio-political'- organizations are taking up new roles,

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<sup>4</sup> The Al Khidmat Foundation is associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami oldest 'Islamist' political party (founded 1941), while the Minhaj Welfare Foundation is part of the Minhaj-ul-Quran International religious organization, which political wing is the Pakistan Awami Tehreek.

<sup>5</sup> I choose to describe these organizations as 'religio-political' because it is a more descriptive term, and in order to avoid the connotations attached to the term 'Islamist' in contemporary politics and media debate.

departing from traditional roles in *dawa*<sup>6</sup> and charity work (Iqtidar, 2011; Jamal, 2013). Much less attention has been paid to the way in which religion and gender shape conceptions and practices of development among women engaged in development-related activities in religio-political movements (exceptions include Hafez, 2011; Jamal, 2013). In this paper I ask: how does religion influence women's conceptions and practices of development, and how are these gendered? I set out to answer this question by examining women's religious practices and development engagements in two religio-political women's organizations<sup>7</sup> in Pakistan, taking into account the perspectives and experiences of the women themselves.

The central argument presented here is that women activists engage in multiple and competing discourses on gender and development existing in contemporary Pakistan, which in different ways influence their conceptions of development and forms of engagement. This argument is substantiated by seven subsections. I first investigate the space for women's religio-political activism and development work, situating these organizations in the broader landscape of women's organizations in Pakistan. Second, I analyse how the women activists understand and justify their own activism, and third, how gender ideologies influence the women's charity and development engagements. Next, I analyse how the women activists conceptualize development and engage in development-related activities, balancing ideological and pragmatic concerns. I then focus on the relationship between women's religious practices and development engagement, combining *dawa* and development. Thereafter, I discuss the women activists' class-based positionalities and assumptions, before I conclude with a discussion of how the women activists relate to competing discourses on gender and development existing in Pakistan. Before moving on to the analysis, I place this study in the context of wider debates about religion, development and gender, presenting the central conceptual apparatus applied in the analysis and outlining the methodology employed.

### **Development, Islam, and modernity**

In studying these religio-political activists as development actors, the focus is on their effort to help people in need and to contribute to societal development. As such, I am not primarily

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<sup>6</sup> The Arabic term 'dawa' means to 'call' or 'invite' to Islam and has become the common term used by Muslims to describe activities that aim to attract people to Islam. *Dawa* is emphasized in the Quran and invitation to Islam and is a common activity of modern Islamic movements (Euben, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> These women organizations can be seen as a subset of so-called 'faith-based organizations' in Pakistan directly linked to religio-political parties. Alongside other religious and secularly oriented NGOs, these make up a diverse field of organizations that are varyingly engaged in distributing charity, providing welfare services, humanitarian relief, and development aid.

interested in women's political participation, but in their engagement in development. While development can be understood in a broad sense as societal change, it is often used in a much narrower sense to describe the planned activities of international development actors (Horst and Sinatti, 2015; Hart, 2001). The origin of the idea of development as planned and guided intervention to improve the life of others, and as a means to aid broader processes of societal change, has been traced to 19th century Europe experiencing the consequences of industrialization and modernization (Cowen and Shenton, 1996). The idea of aiding the 'distant other' emerged in response to social unrest as well as to wars in Europe, but also as part of the colonial project (Barnett and Weiss, 2008, p. 21). Through the provision of welfare services in health and education, colonial officers and missionaries were taking on the responsibilities, not only of improving people's material conditions, but also of civilizing and reforming the poor and uncivilized subjects (Stirrat, 2008). After World War II, development aid was increasingly institutionalized as an international system of development aid (Tomas and Boli, 1999; Barnett, 2005). Development programmes implemented by developing countries' governments, often with the support of international aid, have been guided by dominant ideologies of development in which modernization and secularization – understood as the transformation from traditional and religious to modern and secular societies – were seen as requirements for progress (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). While development theories and approaches has diversified over the years ( with focus on human development and participatory approaches) , the idea of modernization, and the belief that development can be planned and measured according to externally determined criteria, persists. The notion of trusteeship (Cowen & Shenton, 1996) - that those who consider themselves as developed are responsible for guiding the development of those who are not - is inherent in the idea of intentional development (Nustad, 2001). The idea of guided intervention, which entails beliefs in reform and improvement, is found among colonial officers and missionaries, but also among contemporary development actors in terms of training people, and consciousness-raising (Stirrat, 2008). As such development interventions can be seen to encompass a notion of improvement and reform not only of institutions but of individuals, and as involving not only material improvement, but also improvement through changing norms and values.

Islamic reformism can be seen as an alternative modernizing project when compared to that of the colonial rulers. The so-called 'global Islamic resurgence' emerging in the 20th century has been explained as a response to modernity, colonialization and globalization (Nasr, 1994; Mandaville, 2007; Juul Petersen, 2016). Calls for increased solidarity among

the global community of Muslims (*ummah*) became central to Islamic anti-colonial liberation discourses (Juul Petersen, 2016). While rejecting colonialism and Western imperialism, Islamic resistance to colonial rule was not defined in opposition to modernity. As argued by Nasr (1996, p. 51), in the vision of Sayid Abul ala Maududi (one of the founders and the chief ideologue of Jamaat-e-Islami), ‘the vanguard of the Islamic revolution’ was not the traditional Islamic clergy, but was instead the modern middle-class Muslim man – and the modern Muslim middle-class family.<sup>8</sup> Viewing education as a means to transform women, women’s education has been central to modernization discourses in diverse contexts (Chatterjee, 1989; Robinson, 2008). In both the colonial civilization project and the Islamic reform movement, women in middle-class households became central modernizing subjects (Khurshid, 2015). In Islamic reform movement, the ‘ideal Muslim women’ was constructed through education teaching appropriate behaviors, emphasizing modesty and morality in daily life (Khurshid, 2015, p. 102).

### **Muslim women, gender, and development**

The role of religion in gender and development has seen increased attention in recent years (Tomalin, 2015). In general, however, religion – and Islam in particular – is often presented as an obstacle to development, and particularly to the inclusion of women and gendered approaches to development (Deneulin and Bano, 2009; Pearson and Tomalin, 2008). Aligned with trends in mainstream development, the gender and development discourse and practices are typically materialist and secularist (Tomalin, 2015). There has been little interest in notions of gender equality, women’s rights, or ideal womanhood which do not correspond with liberal, secular feminist understandings of these concepts dominant in the gender and development field (Tomalin, 2013; Bano, 2009). Women participating in conservative religious movements are often disregarded as irrational, irrelevant, and backward (Bano, 2009).

Gender equality has emerged as a widely accepted and unquestionable goal in global development and human rights discourses (Østebø & Haukanes, 2016). The meaning of gender equality, however, is not a given. Conceptualizations of gender equality, and particularly the notion of difference, have produced long-standing debates within feminist theory.<sup>9</sup> In mainstream gender and development discourses, however, ‘gender equality’ is

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<sup>8</sup> For a similar discussion on Indian nationalism and modernity see Chatterjee (1989).

<sup>9</sup> See for example Østebø & Haukanes (2016) and Bock & James (1992).

commonly understood as equality between women and men in all spheres of life, encompassing not only equal access and opportunities (sometimes referred to as ‘gender equity’), but also transformation of patriarchal gender relations as a way to empower women (Tomalin, 2013, p. 153). Opposed to this feminist understanding of gender equality, are conceptions of gender equality informed by gender ideologies (denoting what are considered ideal gender roles and relations) based on complementarity, in which women and men are seen as intrinsically different, and as having different roles, rights, and obligations. Gender ideologies promoting role complementarity are found across religious, cultural and geographical contexts (Avishai, 2008; Ben Shitrit, 2013; Burke, 2012; Østebø, 2015), and influence how women and men conceptualize gender equality, women’s roles, rights, and responsibilities.

When exploring the intersection of religion, gender, and development in the context of religio-political women, it is useful to draw on insights from the literature on Muslim women found in post-structuralist and postcolonial feminist scholarship (see Hafez, 2011; Iqtidar, 2013; Jamal, 2013; Mahmood, 2005), as well as from studies of gender and religion which, in different religious traditions and geographical contexts, have challenged images of religious women depicted as victims of their religious belief (see Avishai, 2008; Ben Shitrit, 2013; Mahmood; 2005; Rinaldo, 2014). While representations of Muslim women as ‘the other’, as oppressed by patriarchal culture and religion and as victims in need of rescue (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mohanty, 2002) have long dominated Western academic writing, studies essentializing Islam and presenting reductionist images of third world Muslim women have been thoroughly challenged (Bano, 2009; Mohanty, 2002).

Over the past decades, a rapidly expanding literature on gender and religion in general, and on women and Islam in particular, has shed light on religion and modernity in women’s everyday lives and activism (Avishai, Jafar & Rinaldo, 2015). Concerned with the question of religious women’s agency, these scholars critique existing theories as being locked in a paradigm that presents ‘a false dichotomy of women being either empowered or victimized, liberated or subordinated’ (Burke, 2012, p. 123). They suggest that by doing contextual analysis of women’s agency (Mahmood, 2005; Ben Shitrit, 2013), it is possible to challenge perceptions of religious women as being oppressed, and instead enquire into the meaning these women give to their actions, without dismissing the role of faith as irrelevant. What these studies of women in conservative, gender-traditional Islamic movements have in



common, is that they contest notions of Islam as being anti-modern, and argue instead for an understanding of Islam as part of the modern, as an expression of ‘multiple modernities’ (Khurshid, 2015). Identifying diverging interpretations of women’s roles, rights and responsibilities, they emphasize the need to understand women’s situated subjectivities, where women’s own experiences shape and are shaped by particular historical and geographical contexts, as well as the intersections of religion, gender and broader class-based identities (Yuval- Davis, 2006; Khurshid, 2015). This paper seeks to contribute to an analysis of the intersection of gender, religion and development in a specific context, as positioned, relational, and situated knowledge(s) (Haraway, 1988).

### **Methods and data**

This article emerged from a larger study examining Islamic charity and development engagements among actors associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI), two religio-political organizations originating in Pakistan, with strong transnational networks to Europe and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> As the two religious movements practise gender segregation,<sup>11</sup> my attention was turned to the women’s organizations and their involvement in development work.<sup>12</sup> In this article I primarily draw on semi-structured interviews in Urdu and English with 30 women<sup>13</sup> working or volunteering in women’s organizations associated with religio-political movements in Pakistan. Reflecting the member base of the two movements, the women and men I interviewed belonged to the urban, educated middle class and elite. They were otherwise a heterogeneous group: they ranged in age from early twenties to older than sixty years; they were ethnically and geographically diverse (including Punjabi, Pashtuns, and Muhajees); and they held diverse socio-economic positions, reflected partially through level and type of education, occupation (working/housewife) and marital status. Not all informants were official members of the political parties, but all were engaged in welfare work and social activism associated with one of the two movements. I interviewed women at the organizations’ headquarters in Lahore, but also in other city branches and field offices. The interviews focused on what, how, and why women engaged in charity and development-related activities. The data was

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<sup>10</sup> See article 2 in this thesis.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted here that although gender segregation is uncommon among NGOs in Pakistan, political party structures are commonly structured with separate women’s wings (Sahi, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> For a study of the all-male organizational counterparts of these women’s organizations, see article 4 in this thesis.

<sup>13</sup> The larger study involved qualitative, multi-sited fieldwork in Pakistan, Norway and the UK in the period 2012 to 2015, including a total of 92 semi-structured interviews with both men and women. Research participants were recruited through snow-ball sampling.

analysed using thematic codes, developed partly from the research questions and partly as they emerged from the empirical material. The interviews in this study are complemented by informal interviews and participatory observations from project sites and events, as well as printed and online material published by the organizations.

Because this study focuses on the ideas and practices of development among the women associated with two particular religio-political movements in Pakistan, it is not an organizational study, but is rather an analysis of how women activists give meaning to what they do, how they present and reflect upon it, and how they represent their work to external audiences. As such it is not an assessment of the effect of the work they do. Although an analysis of the actual outcomes of their development activities would merit interest, for instance from the perspectives of the beneficiaries, this lies outside the scope of the present study.

In order to explore how women engage in ideological discourses about religion, gender, and development, it is necessary to enquire into the meaning these women give to their social practice. To do so, it is necessary to set aside feminist judgment and instead take the explanations provided by the women activists seriously. From the point of view of understanding knowledge as constructed in the meeting between researcher and research participants, my own position as a foreign, non-Muslim female researcher has influenced the production of data and my analysis. I hope my analysis will give justice to the voices of the women participating in this project.

### **Situating women's activism in Pakistan**

A number of political, social, and cultural factors, both local and global, have shaped Pakistan since the 1970s. Neo-liberal political and economic reforms have opened up for privatization of welfare and social services, increasing the space for NGOs. The Government of Pakistan, in line with mainstream development paradigms, has introduced a number of policies and reforms aimed at enhancing women's participation in politics, community development, and the economy (Jamal, 2013). While Pakistan can be described as a gender-traditional society among large parts of the population (Mirza, 1999; Weiss, 2014), a number of changes that have taken place over the last decades have altered the situation for women in Pakistan. Massive rural–urban migration, increased access to education for men and women, and entry of middle-class groups into local and national politics have opened up space for women's participation in public life (Jamal, 2013). At the same time, Pakistan has undergone a process of Islamization of law and society (Jamal, 2013, pp. 204–205) and

many of the government's policies on gender equality have met resistance from the religious establishment (Kirmani, 2013; Weiss, 2014). Pakistan is experiencing a so-called 'religious resurgence', where Islamic reformist movements are becoming more visible, not only as political parties but in everyday life (Iqtidar, 2011). Religion and religiously informed gender norms are at the crux of these transformations. Pakistani society is marked by multiple competing gender ideologies, and the role of women, particularly in the public sphere, is highly contested.

The AKWT and the MWT are situated in a broad landscape of women's organizations in Pakistan, sharing a focus on women in particular, providing assistance to women, and working to transform women's position in society. While there is great diversity among these organizations in terms of scope, scale, and focus of activities, two broad groups can be identified: women-focused NGOs, and women organizations associated with religio-political movements. The women-focused NGOs are in different ways inspired by liberal feminist ideas, and by the global discourses on gender equality and women's rights. Feminist ideas and activism have a long history in Pakistan, as is the case in many Muslim majority countries. In the 1970s, several feminist women's NGOs were established, including the Aurat Foundation, Women Action Network, and Shirkat Gah, which have been influential in shaping the discourse on gender equality, women's rights, and empowerment in Pakistan (Bano, 2009; Kirmani, 2013). Without being explicitly secular or anti-religious, many liberal feminists in Pakistan, as elsewhere in the Global South, uphold that women's rights are best defined outside of a religious framework (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987; Bano, 2009; Kirmani, 2013).<sup>14</sup>

In parallel to the women's rights movement, religio-political women's activism developed with the growth of 'Islamism' in Pakistan and the Islamization policies of General Zia ul Haq (from 1979). Women's organizations associated with the JI and the MQI are among the best-established organizations in Pakistan. Many female activists in these religio-political women's organizations endorse gender ideologies that are actively promoting rather than challenging patriarchy. While sharing a concern for the position of women with the women's-rights-oriented NGOs, the women in these religio-political women's organizations are not considering themselves to be feminist, but define themselves in opposition to what they consider to be Westernized ideas about women's liberation. Like many other NGOs in

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<sup>14</sup> Islamic feminism has had limited influence in Pakistan. The women's movement has periodically and strategically engaged with religious discourse and actors with varying degrees of success (Kirmani, 2013). Pakistani feminists have been divided on this issue, and for some, engaging with Islam was unavoidable as issues about women's rights were being framed in a religious manner by the state itself (Kirmani, 2013, p. 19).

Pakistan, both groups of women's organizations are run by the urban, educated, middle-class and other elites, pointing to the significance not only of gendered and religious subjectivities, but also to the importance of class, education, and geography in these women's subject positions.

*The Al Khidmat Women Trust (AKWT) and the Minhaj Women League (MWL)*

The AKWT<sup>15</sup> presents itself as an organization that works for social reformation. Its main areas of focus are welfare, relief, and development. Spreading the teaching of Islam (*dawa*) and the religious training and moral self-fashioning of the individual (*tarbiyat*)<sup>16</sup> are also seen as integral functions of the organization. The AKWT's main activities include the provision of health services, education, water supply, vocational training, financial aid, dowry boxes, collective marriages as well as religious classes. The AKWT is the sister organization of the all-male Al Khidmat Foundation (ALKF),<sup>17</sup> and is part of a network of organizations associated with the JI. The work of the AKWT is part of the welfare tradition of the JI, for which the provision of welfare services both to its own party members and to others in need have been a central part of party ideology since the 1950s (Bano, 2012). Starting as a small-scale initiative in a local neighborhood in Karachi in the 1960s, the AKWT was formally registered in 1980 and has since grown to a countrywide network with branches in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Faisalabad and Hyderabad, and with smaller offices tied to the JI political party structure across the country. While the core individuals running the AKWT are associated with the JI, volunteers are recruited through social networks within and outside the party, mainly from the urban, middle-class and elite social strata.

The MWL is the women's wing of the MQI, which is a member-based religious organization founded in Pakistan in 1981 by the religious scholar and lawyer Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, a charismatic preacher-turned-politician. The MQI is structured on the model of the JI, with hierarchical tiers of organizations in Pakistan and the diaspora. Unlike the AKWT, the MWL does not have a specific focus on welfare, but sees charity, welfare and development work as an integral part of their mission, whose specific focus areas are

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<sup>15</sup> Also known as Al Khidmat Khawateen.

<sup>16</sup> Mandaville (2007, p. 59) notes how in Islamist movements, the religiously inflected notion of *tarbiya* (Arabic), implies a holistic sense of human growth and development that accrues through knowledge of religion.

<sup>17</sup> The two organizations have developed as gender-segregated parallel structures, working in close collaboration. At the time of research three female representatives of AKWT were part of the board of the Al Khidmat Foundation.

spreading the teaching of Islam (*dawa*), the religious training and moral self-fashioning of the individual (*tarbiyat*) and the building and strengthening of the organization (*tanzeemat*). The MWL collaborates with the Minhaj Welfare Foundation – the MQI organization whose specific mandate is welfare, relief and development – in some of its welfare and relief activities, particularly in the preparation and distribution of food, clothes and other items to women and children. The activists of the MWL are organized into local chapters across the country and much of their work takes place in the communities in which they live. Similar to the JI, the MQI appeals to the Pakistani middle class (Philippon, 2014). Most of the women activists I interviewed were educated, and several held degrees in Islamic Studies from the Minhaj University in Lahore.

Both the AKWT and the MWL are women’s organizations associated with two religio-political movements in Pakistan that advance particular interpretations of Islam in which religion and politics are seen as inseparable, and for which the establishment of an Islamic state is the ultimate goal. The movements are reformist in that they break with earlier interpretations of Islam, advancing an integration of Islam and modernity, while rejecting what they consider to be ‘Western secularity’ (Jamal, 2013). While the two movements have had mixed and shifting relationships with the state throughout their histories, both movements and their associated political parties can today be considered part of the mainstream political opposition in Pakistan. Both the JI and the MQI are hierarchically structured organizations, similar to the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East (Mandaville, 2007). They can be seen as expressions of highly organized forms of Islamic reformism linked to political parties amid a much broader trend of the so-called ‘Islamic resurgence’ in Pakistan, in which Islamic ways of life are increasingly expressed not only through membership in formal organizations, but also through ways of living everyday life, visible in Islamic fashion, shopping, schooling, media, and banking.

The two religio-political movements with which these women are associated, exhibit very different stances towards international development discourse and practice. The JI takes a strong anti-Western stance, criticizing the international development industry for being culturally imperialist, paternalistic, and Eurocentric (Jamal, 2013, p. 190). The MQI takes a more accommodating approach in searching for common ground. Adopting the language of human rights and democracy, MQI is presenting itself as an enlightened Muslim alternative to extremism and terrorism.

Women in both the AKWT and the MWL position themselves in contrast to competing discourses on gender and development. They hold themselves distinct from what

they perceive to be more traditionalist and more extremist Islamic positions, as well as from what they regard as secular (or, more accurately, *la-deeni*, meaning non-religious) development ideals. In particular, they disassociate themselves from what they see as foreign-imposed, Western-centric feminism, which they consider as upsetting to the ideal social order. The two organizations can be viewed as being in competition with one another and with other religio-political groups, for the higher moral ground. They both present themselves as alternatives – to more traditional culture which is seen as backward and anti-modern (such as cultural practices described by the research participants as ‘un-Islamic remains of Hindu culture’), to other competing religio-political projects that they consider ‘extremist’ or ‘terrorist’ (for example, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan), and to ‘feminism’ as advocated by liberal feminist women’s organizations locally and globally.

### **Gender ideology and practice**

The JI and the MQI are both patriarchal organizations promoting gender ideologies in which ideal gender roles and relations, rights and responsibilities are defined by biological differences, reflecting what they understand as God-given, ontological differences between men and women. In a similar manner to other movement adhering to gender-traditional ideologies (Burke, 2012), the JI and the MQI promote the belief that men and women were created to fulfil different and complementary (but equally worthy) roles. Unlike feminist conceptions of gender equality in all spheres of life, women and men are seen as having different but complementary rights and responsibilities. Women’s primary responsibility is towards the family as a mother and wife, taking care of the home, her children, and her husband. Men’s primary responsibility is as protector and provider for the family. The rights and responsibilities of the individual are understood in the contexts of the collective, including units such as the marriage between man and woman, the family (extended family and kin), and society. These gender ideologies based on complementarity are also reflected in the physical separation of men and women, where the primary male sphere is the public, while the female sphere is the domestic. Being part of gender-traditional religious organizations, the women working in the ALWT and the MWL can be assumed to be socialized into gender roles of domesticity. In the following section, I look more closely at how the women themselves understand their own activism and what space is available for women’s activism and their role as development actors within the two movements.

Both the AKWT and the MWL are gender-segregated, women-only environments, practicing *purdah*. *Purdah*, meaning curtain, is the common word describing the institution

of secluding women from men to enforce high standards of female modesty (Papanek, 1971; Jamal, 2013). The institution of purdah defines appropriate interaction between men and women, but what ‘appropriate’ means is subject to multiple individual and collective interpretations, reflected not only in a diversity of practices between groups, but also within groups and families (Weiss, 2014). Gender segregation is not unique to these religio-political organizations; in fact it is quite common in the workplace in Pakistan (Mirza, 1999). In the mainstream development sector, for example, female social organizers work with women, while the males work with men (Grünenfelder, 2013).

The institution of purdah is a central element in Islamist ideologies in South Asia. The institution of purdah is a central element in Islamist ideologies in South Asia. In one of his key texts from 1939, ‘Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam’, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi – JI’s key ideologue – emphasized the separation of men and women as the foundation of the social structure in the ideal Islamic state. Similarly, in the writings of the MQI’s spiritual and political leader, Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, the institution of purdah is seen as ensuring a moral society: preventing promiscuity and supporting the centrality of marriage and the family as the foundation of the ideal Islamic state (Qadri, 2011).

The women I interviewed all observed purdah in different ways. For example, while all the women veiled themselves, there was great variation in terms of using a loose *dupatta*, a fitted *hijab* or a full covering *niqab*. The women activists practise purdah by wearing a covering, and by gender-segregated organizing of activities, but unlike more traditionalistic interpretations of purdah which confine women to the home, these women participate in the public sphere. In both organizations, women can work (in paid work and as activists) as long as purdah is observed and as long as it does not compromise their primary domestic responsibilities, which are towards the family and the home. The MWL has structured its organization so that women can join as volunteers for Minhaj without neglecting their responsibilities at home. As explained to me by Shazia,<sup>18</sup> a Minhaj ‘sister’ in her twenties:

As you know, in our society females have to do household work, and there are family matters too, and besides that some have to work outside the home. So we have divided work in small units so that if a person spares one hour, it becomes workable for her.

In this way, the women in the MWL do not directly challenge what they consider to be women’s role as the keeper of the house, but have found ways to balance their domestic

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<sup>18</sup> All names are pseudonyms to protect the research participants’ identities.

responsibilities with their new roles in the public sphere. Other women's reflections involved more complex considerations than simply making their activism secondary to their domestic responsibilities. For instance Salima, a Minhaj sister in her thirties, said:

Where a female thinks that she can perform work outside the home after fulfilling the household responsibilities – just like you are doing, as I am sitting here ... if I feel that I am managing my household tasks and I can work outside the home, then a female should work. Then this concept should not exist that I will keep myself bound in the house and pay my services to the house only. So if you have a talent to do work outside the home, so you should do so.

Sitting in her own office in Lahore, Salima was asserting her right to use her talent outside the home, revealing a sense of conscious choice associated with autonomous free will that stands in contrast to notions of duty and responsibility towards the family often assumed of women socialized to domesticity (Ben Shitrit, 2013). The women working at the MQI headquarters in Lahore have all moved up the organizational hierarchy. For some, working at the headquarters involves leaving their home towns and families and moving to Lahore. This is viewed as inappropriate by many in Pakistan (Grünenfelder, 2013). The commitment to activism by these women can also pose challenges for them, both practical and moral. As Amina, a Minhaj sister in her thirties, explained it: 'Sometime you have to sacrifice something to reach your objectives'. She has sacrificed – at least for a period – traditional family life, so central to the female ideal in the MQI. The women at the MQI headquarters demonstrate by their own examples that it is possible for women to prioritize their own interests, both in terms of practical arrangements (such as women's hostels) and moral acceptability, and that women's activism is accepted and facilitated by the organization.

### **Purdah and activism**

Working in gender-segregated organizations, men and women collaborate in executing relief and development work. While the AKWT is a separate organization to the main, all-male Al Khidmat Foundation, the two organizations collaborate closely in relief operations. According to Sana, an Al Khidmat sister in her forties, the male organization takes care of the tasks that, in her opinion, woman cannot do, like constructing tents or distributing relief help in floodwaters. Sana explains how men and women have different, complementary roles in the emergency operation:



In times of catastrophes, we work in the form of three R's. The first R is Rescue; it is purely done by our male members, by our Foundation members [the Al Khidmat Foundation]. The second R is Relief. When the second R comes; they [the Al Khidmat Foundation] call on us for to make family packs ... which we call relief packages. These include tents, there is mattress, all the necessities, I mean [food] rations and all the food items, so basically for one family we arrange a whole small home for them, which is distributed by our male members ... The most active phase for the Women's Trust is Relief. And then the third R comes, Rehabilitation ... they [men] distribute different things, seeds, cattle and all the other things for their livelihood, or they want to make their houses and all that, so we give money.

Reflecting their ideas about what are appropriate gender roles and relations, women also do what they believe men cannot do: they focus on women, assessing women's needs and providing assistance to women in a gender-segregated fashion, for instance as female doctors, in women's centres with vocational training course for women, and in providing separated education for girls and boys.

By engaging themselves in welfare and relief work, the women are not submitting to customary or traditional roles, but are negotiating new spaces for women's participation in the public sphere. They are gradually expanding women's space, not only by doing charity work in the local communities, but also by travelling long distances to take part in relief work. Travelling to the earthquake- and flood-affected areas, the women can be seen as expanding the space available to women within the movements. Travelling in the company of other women, appropriately veiled, the women relief workers have accomplished something that is out of reach for most women in Pakistan. They narrated their experiences with enthusiasm and pride, revealing a sense of empowerment. As such, these religious organizations offer a space for women's activism that for many would be unthinkable outside a religious setting. Here, the practice of *purdah* through gender segregation and veiling can be seen as providing a moral safeguard that makes women's participation in the public sphere morally acceptable.

### **Ideology and pragmatism**

As in many women's NGOs, both the AKWT and the MWL focus on helping women and children in need. Not unlike the construction of 'poor women' in other development discourses (Zaman, 2008), the women activists perceive 'poor women' to be particularly helpless, vulnerable and in need of protection. These representations can in part be understood as a reflection of essentialized gender roles, where women are seen as vulnerable by nature, but they can also be understood as political evaluations of the situation for women

in present-day Pakistan. The women activists describe contemporary Pakistan as a difficult and dangerous place for women to live. Far from an ideal society in their view, the situation in Pakistan is described as posing concrete threats to individual women's security and to their livelihoods. In this respect, the religio-political women's organizations share several concerns (and assumptions) with many feminist women's NGOs. To aid women's needs, the religio-political women's organizations engage in a diversity of activities, some of which are charity-oriented and aimed at immediate relief such as cash grants and health care, and others that seek to help people improve their situation with a longer-term perspective, through education and vocational training.

The women these organizations aim to help are perceived as poor in both spiritual and material terms. Poverty is understood not only as lack of material needs, but also as spiritual deprivation and moral decline. The consequences of poverty are conceived of as a threat to the wellbeing of the individual, as well as to the desired social order, and to related gender norms. In contrast to mainstream development approaches where women's employment is seen as desirable if not indispensable to economic development (also in Government of Pakistan policy), women employment is not seen as desirable by all women in these movements. In both JI and MQI Islam is interpreted to give women the right to be taken care of financially by her male relatives. Hence some women perceive women's employment as a negative consequence of poverty. For instance, in the words of Bushra, an Al Khidmat sister in her forties:

Basically I think the problems faced by the women of ours are purely because of, I mean, the male ... are not getting jobs ... if the males get the jobs, the women can stay at home. She can educate her girl, her boy, both of them and, they can live like a family. But nowadays because there are less jobs for men, and they are not employed properly, so the women have to work too.

In Bushra's view, the lack of employment opportunities for men is forcing women into employment in order to provide for themselves and their families. This break with their understanding of women's right to be taken care of financially by men, and is seen as coming in the way of women's domestic obligations. Recognising that this 'right' is not enjoyed by most poor women in Pakistan today, however, the AKWT supports women through skills development and vocational training. In their women's community centre in Lahore, poor women are offered training in sewing and embroidery – skills that will enable women to earn a living from within their homes. As such, the women activists can be seen as

breaking with strict ideals about women's domestic roles. By providing women with the means to 'earn with dignity',<sup>19</sup> the women activists can be seen as negotiating ideological and pragmatic concerns, deciding which norms to uphold and which ones to challenge.

### **Dawa and development**

For the women activists, conditions in Pakistan are seen as posing a threat to women's spiritual development. Contemporary society is viewed as in decline – both economically and morally. This decline is explained partly as the result of mismanagement and inability of the state to provide for its citizens, and partly as the result of a lack of religion. The high levels of poverty, corruption, and violence marking contemporary Pakistan are also understood by some of the women to be a consequence of people losing their faith and not living in accordance with the Quranic teachings.

While the religio-political women's organizations share a number of concerns with many mainstream feminist women's NGOs, the ways in which these social problems are constructed differ – as do the proposed remedies for solving these issues. Unlike mainstream approaches to development that commonly employ materialist and often secular understandings of development (Tomalin, 2015), the approaches to development advanced by these women organizations incorporate both material and spiritual dimensions. The women activists uphold the view that in order to change society, people need to turn to religion. Social change is conceived to be contingent upon change at the personal level. Owing to this relationship between the personal and the collective, the religious training and moral self-fashioning of the individual becomes central to these women's conceptions of social change and societal development. In the MWL, apart from the tasks of preparing and distributing food and other relief items, welfare work is seen as integral part of the work of the departments focusing on dawa and tarbiyat. In both the MQI and the JI, emphasis is put on the importance of seeking knowledge. The women activists are well-schooled in the movements' respective interpretations of Islam. Religious knowledge is not only important for the purpose of spiritual attainment; it is also closely tied to social action (Nasr, 1994; Jamal, 2013). The significance placed on religious teachings is further reflected in the comments of women activists about their activism. Sana, an Al Khidmat sister in her forties, explained:

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.alkhidmatkhawateen.org/english/welfare\\_planing.php](http://www.alkhidmatkhawateen.org/english/welfare_planing.php)

We have this *Hadith* in our religion. Our Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said that ‘if you know one good thing then you should transfer it to others.’ So in our religion, we are constantly a *daii* [one who teaches dawa]. I mean, if I am saying anything to you, I am a daii. I should tell you some good things too. Being a Muslim is being incomplete without dawa ... In our religion, in our culture, a lady is also a daii. A lady, a woman, a housewife is also a daii. She is giving dawa to her kids. She is teaching good ... we are daiis to our maids, meaning we are giving dawa to our maids too. In our religion, we are responsible for all persons who are under us for their moralities.

When I came here and we made this centre, when we started teaching them stitching, teaching them computer, we decided that we should be taking care of their moralities too. And this was being taught to us in that class [of the JI] ... you should take care of their need, their spiritual and their physical need. And their spiritual need is to be a good member of the society, to be a good Muslim ... this is dawa, the teaching moralities to others, because it’s part of our religion to teach others good and forbid them from evil.

Reflecting upon their motivation for their work, all the women I interviewed pointed to individual religious motivations, viewing their welfare work as an integral part of their religious practice. Religion or *din* – the Islamic way of life – was emphasized as a key motivational factor for engaging in voluntary work. The religious motivations are complex: they include what the women describe as a religiously prescribed duty to help individuals in need and to contribute to building a better society, but they also involve very personal notions of fear and rewards, both in the present and in the afterlife. Lailah, a senior woman activist with the ALWT, explained while we were sitting in her grand but modestly decorated house in one of Lahore’s better neighbourhoods: ‘We do this to please God ... it is not only about the development of society here today, but also about rewards in the hereafter’.

Religious teachings and ways of conduct imparted through the JI and the MQI serve as motivation and shape women’s activism and development engagements in both organizations. In order to improve the current situation in Pakistan, the women activists emphasized the need to make changes at the individual and the societal level. In their view, a good society is a moral society made up of righteous, pious individuals. Thus, leading people to ‘the right path’ through their own example, such as in helping the poor, is central to these women’s ideas of development and the ways to achieve it. Because most people in Pakistan are already Muslims, converting people to Islam is not the main purpose of dawa. Rather, it is about guiding people in how to be ‘good Muslims’. Spreading what they believe to be ‘the right way of Islam’ becomes, for them, a necessary and integrated part of what can be

described as their approach to development. Written material and DVDs, together with religious classes, are used to educate the members and to attract new middle-class women to the organizations.

### **Class-based subjectivities and assumptions**

What most of the women that I interviewed had in common, was that they did this work in a voluntary capacity and mobilized local resources. While the mainstream, rights-based women's NGOs usually rely on institutional, and often foreign, funding (Bano, 2009), the women of the AKWT and the MWL are conscious of not taking money from institutional donors, and rely instead on resources raised through individuals in their own networks. The main male-run aid organizations associated with the JI and the MQI are led by development professionals (drawing salaries for their work, and having degrees in development management). By contrast, most women in these organizations work as volunteers and invest considerable time and resources in their work. The Al Khidmat women I met in Lahore spend some four hours every day in the field office of one of the city's low-income neighbourhoods. Their work involves some personal sacrifice, such as giving their time, paying their own money (for tea and petrol for themselves, but also for medicines if urgently needed by some of their clients) and, as one woman activists explained, suffering the heat in low-income areas.

The women generally seem to be very conscious of their personal socio-economic situations, viewing themselves as in a position to 'give something back' and as having a religious duty to help those in need. Some of the women activists who volunteer their time on a daily basis are in a position where they do not have to work, and their financial needs are taken care of by their male relatives. Other women activists find time in their schedules to volunteer after work. All the activists are assisting women they consider to be less well-off than themselves. Both the JI and the MQI mobilize resources and volunteers among urban middle-class and elite women, as explained by Rabia, an Al Khidmat sister in her sixties:

The way we work, actually we approach the well-off families, well-off women and we educate them about what's the purpose of our living, that one day naturally we have to ... we will have to leave this world and we have to go in front of God, and exhibit our responsibilities as a Muslim, what we have done. We are, praise God (*alhamdulillah*), from rich families, and so are the other families too ... we take them to these suburbs and most of these women haven't ever visited these [low-income] areas ... when they see all the poverty over there, then they voluntarily give their time, and with their time the money also comes.

The activities these urban, educated, middle-class and elite women engage in and how they choose to engage, reflect not only gendered or religious subjectivities, but also class-based subjectivities of women belonging to the middle-class and elite social strata in contemporary Pakistan. Although the women activists can be seen as utilizing their own gender identity to connect with the women they set out to assist, one might question whether these gender-based identities lead to an understanding and ability among such women to meet the needs of women in the low-income areas in which they work. How does their urban, educated, middle-class and elite position affect their assessment of challenges to women's wellbeing? It is important to question how relevant these ideological and religious agendas are when considering women in need, and how such assistance is perceived by the recipients of that assistance. This lies outside the scope of this study, but clearly it would be an interesting area for further research.

The way in which the women activists talk about the poor women they aim to assist, reveals a shared notion of being responsible for the moral improvement of others. It explicates a hierarchical structure of proselytizing to subordinates and protecting them from 'their own harmful ways', which is not unlike reform projects of colonial missionaries, or of contemporary 'development missionaries' (Stirrat, 2008, p. 21). In all of these projects, development can be seen as a moral, spiritual, and civilizational agenda, where middle-class actors aim not simply at improve the economic condition of the poor, but to improve the poor themselves, to make them into better (more moral, more worthy, more conscious) subjects. This reflects an idea about poverty that focuses on the individual, and not on structural inequalities in society that are manifested in class differences between the activists and their beneficiaries.

### **Competing discourses on gender and development**

The women of the AKWT and the MWL actively engage with the official ideologies and authorities within their respective religio-political movements, and also with local and global discourses on gender and development. While some Pakistani feminists interpret Islamic teachings in ways that allow feminist notions of gender equality and women's rights to be compatible with an Islamic framework (Weiss, 2014), the women I have interviewed in AKWT fervently reject what they call 'Western feminism'. The AKWT women in particular seem to be very well aware of dominant discourses on gender and development and are providing counter-discourses with alternative interpretations of women's empowerment and understandings of women's rights. These women do not attempt to redefine or challenge the

principal patriarchal structure in society. At a discursive level, they do not view patriarchy as a system to be changed; they adhere to gender ideologies emphasizing the complementarity of 'God-given' gender roles in which biological sex reflects ontological differences between men and women. In practice, however, I find that gender ideologies are negotiated within a patriarchal framework. How the women activists are negotiating pragmatic concerns and religious teachings are seen in the ways they explain and justify their own activism and employment, and in the activities that they do such as offering women income-earning opportunities, even if women's employment is seen as undesirable. The women activists draw on discursive elements from both Islam and from international discourses on gender equality when they construct themselves as activists and describe the work they do. Notions relating to gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment are frequently invoked when the women speak about their work, yet these concepts are constructed with reference to the Islamic traditions in which these women are situated, resulting in very different meanings from those commonly understood in mainstream development discourse and practice. The focus on gender complementarity with marriage and family as its most central institutions, places these organizations in opposition to feminist women's rights and advocacy NGOs which, in Pakistan as elsewhere, work to advance gender equality, and which commonly construct women as individual rights-holders independent of their families and other social structures. Although the ways these women understand gender equality and women's rights can be seen as conflicting with those understandings advocated by the feminist women's rights organizations, these women activists are, in comparison to many other women in Pakistan, breaking away from the more traditionalist positions on women's roles, such as those in which women are confined to the domestic sphere. This can be understood as reflecting class-based positionalities of women belonging to the Pakistani urban middle class, who in recent years have been able to gain access to the public sphere through education, employment and political participation.

### **Conclusion**

This article has explored how religious discourses and practice, together with related gender ideologies, influence understandings of development among activists in religio-political women's organizations in Pakistan. Gender ideologies based on complementarity and segregation shape these women's activism. The institution of purdah – the seclusion of women, physically and symbolically from men – influences both what these women engage with and the ways in which they engage, reflecting the gender roles they consider

appropriate. But as this analysis has shown, such ideologies are not fixed; they are interpreted and negotiated by individual women in their everyday life and by women-organized activism.

The women activists in the two organizations share a vision of development in which material and spiritual dimensions are integrated. This is reflected in their rationales and strategies of engagement: they work for change at the individual and the societal level simultaneously through a combination of moral and material improvements. At one level, the women activists of both the AKWT and the MWL are engaging in ideological projects. Drawing on religious teachings and the ideological resources of their respective movements, they are highly conscious of and reflective about their ideological positions. At the same time, the work they do is embedded in their local communities; it is tangible, concrete, and related to the everyday struggles of women in their local neighbourhoods and to victims of natural and conflict-induced disasters. Breaking away from strict interpretations of purdah (for instance by travelling to disaster-affected areas or by offering poor women the opportunity to earn with dignity), the women activists can be seen as balancing ideology and pragmatism, choosing which norms to follow and which ones to reject.

This article focuses on women's activism specifically, because women in religio-political movements rarely are studied as actors in development. In my study I have found that women are important in these roles. Women's principal position in the family – being responsible for raising children, taking care of family health and nutrition, and supporting children in education – makes women central to bringing about change in the family, and by extension in society. Women are considered crucial for creating change (both material and spiritual, and at the individual and social level) also by the all-male organizations, which recognize the importance of women activist in reaching women and in mobilizing both volunteers and resources.

The work these women do in providing welfare, relief, and development is not dissociated from the work of men, but is organized as gender-segregated parallel structures. On one hand, these women's organizations contribute to upholding and reinforcing gender-segregated environments; on the other hand, they provide a space for women to engage in the ideological movement as activists, in professional and volunteer capacities. From a feminist perspective, these women's activism – structured by gender ideology prescribing gender role-complementarity and segregation – might be seen as reifying women's subordinate position. While the ideal gender roles espoused by these women emphasize women's domestic role, these ideals do not prevent women activists from participating in



public life. Paradoxically perhaps, the gender-segregated organizations provide women activists with a space to be active outside the home, to contribute to society, and to realize their religious, social and political commitments and interests, in ways that they find to be in congruence with their interpretations of Islam and the gender roles that they consider appropriate.

Furthermore, this study reveals that although religion and the ideology of the respective movements influence women's everyday life and activism, religion is not the only factor shaping women's subjectivities. Overall the women in this study also reflect particular class-based subjectivities related to the advantaged position of women belonging to the urban, educated middle class and elite in Pakistan. As such the women activists can be seen as utilizing the space opened up to women's participation in public life, through women's access to education, reserved seats in politics, and through new spaces for women's activism in politics and the social sector.

The negotiation these women perform on an everyday basis, reveals how neither Islam nor gender ideologies are fixed entities, but are constantly being interpreted and appropriated by women situated in particular contexts. In light of this, the gender roles espoused by women in these religio-political organizations should not be essentialized as Islamic, but should instead be understood as a particular expression of Muslim women's activism in a certain time and place. As seen in women's religious practice and activism elsewhere (Avishai, 2008; Ben Shitrit, 2013), Islamic teachings, local cultural practices, and global norms form part of the discourses these women navigate, interpret, and appropriate to their local contexts. This makes these women active agents of change, by negotiating which norms and practices to modify and which ones to preserve.

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## Article 4

### **NGOization of Islamic charity: Claiming legitimacy in changing institutional contexts**

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Under review with *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*

#### **Abstract**

Islamic welfare organizations are currently going through processes of ‘NGOization’. Drawing on qualitative data from Pakistan, Norway and the United Kingdom (2012–2015), this article examines how two Islamic welfare organizations which are embedded in Islamic political movements, become ‘Muslim NGOs’. The NGOization of Islamic charity signifies not only a change in organizational structure and legal status, but also more profound changes in organizational discourse and practice, and in the ways the organizations make claims to legitimacy. To claim legitimacy as providers of aid in changing institutional environments, the organizations draw on both religious and professional sources of authority. By analysing the NGOization of Islamic charity, the paper brings out the importance of normative frameworks in shaping organizational legitimacy, and sheds light on the continued significance of both moral and transcendental aspects of the discourses, practices and identities of Muslim NGOs.

**Keywords:** *charity; Islam; development; NGOs; Pakistan*

## **Introduction – changing landscapes of aid**

‘We were the first to reach. We had 20,000 volunteers we could mobilize immediately’, a manager from the Al Khidmat Foundation (ALKF) said, when asked about the organization’s response to the massive earthquake that struck northern parts of Pakistan on 8 October 2005. Islamic aid organizations, including the ALKF, were among the first organizations to access the victims of the earthquake (Candland and Qazi 2012; Wilder 2010), well before the Pakistani Army, the United Nations agencies, and international non-governmental organizations<sup>1</sup> (NGOs) (Strand and Borchgrevink 2006).

Over the last ten years, in the wake of earthquakes, floods and internal displacement, Islamic aid organizations have entered the mainstream field of aid and development in Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> Working alongside national and international aid agencies, the organizations that have been traditionally oriented towards welfare and charity have grown in scale and scope, and they have undergone massive professionalization. As expressed by another representative of the ALKF: ‘there was a need to catch up with the foreign NGOs ... Why should the Islamic organizations lag behind?’ In his view, because so many disasters and conflicts today affect Muslim communities, ‘we need to be there to be part of this, to offer help’. This underlines an obligation to help, but also a perceived need to not be left behind, and for Islamic organizations to claim their space as rightful and legitimate providers of aid.

What we see in Pakistan is part of a broader trend where Islamic charities and aid organizations are becoming significant actors in the field of mainstream aid and development (Juul Petersen 2012), increasingly counted among the ‘new humanitarians’ (Sezgin and Dijkzeul 2015). However, after 9/11 and the ensuing ‘War on Terror’, the legitimacy of Islamic charities and aid organizations has been questioned. Such entities have been severely scrutinized, as a consequence of being ‘Islamic’, and having to prove that they are not financing terror (Juul Petersen 2012; Khan 2012; Thaut et al. 2012).

This article examines the NGOization of Islamic charity through a study of two Islamic aid organizations originating in Pakistan, namely the ALKF and the Minhaj Welfare Foundation (MWF). Drawing on qualitative data from Pakistani Punjab, Oslo, and London, I examine what this NGOization process has entailed, and how it has affected the ways in which organizations make claims to legitimacy.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I adopt Gerard Clarke’s (1998, 36) definition of NGOs as ‘private, non-profit, professional organizations with a distinctive legal character, concerned with public welfare goals’.

<sup>2</sup> I use “aid and development” as shorthand for the international aid system, including both humanitarian and development aid, that while originating in the West, currently dominates globally and sets standards for aid provision (Juul Petersen, 2016).



A number of factors have contributed to the NGOization of Islamic charity in Pakistan. On one hand, the massive and acute need for humanitarian assistance following the 2005 earthquake, repeated floods and long periods of internal conflict, opened the aid field to 'new' actors, and provided an opportunity for these organizations to step up to the challenge. On the other hand, the constraints posed by the stigmatization of Islamic aid organizations made the organizations eager to professionalize. These external factors have prompted internal processes of change, seen in the organizations' strategies to professionalize and to establish formal independence from the political parties. These processes also affect the ways in which Islamic charity, aid, and development are conceived and practised in these organizations.

The transformation from religio-political volunteer-based welfare organizations to professional humanitarian and development NGOs brings new stakeholders to the organizations. Both the ALKF and the MWF are reaching out beyond their old support base of party members and sympathizers, to new potential partners and donors (governments, NGOs and aid agencies) in the mainstream aid and development field, as well as to the broader public in Pakistan and beyond. To claim legitimacy in changing institutional environments, the organizations combine religious and professional authority, relating to the Islamic tradition on one hand, and to the mainstream aid and development discourse and practice on the other. Shifting towards the aid and development sector the organizations adopt or adapt some elements, while they reject or avoid others.

I begin this article by contextualizing the study of Islamic charity, aid and development before I outline a framework for analysing the NGOization of Islamic charity, combining insights from the anthropology of development with neo-institutional theory. Moving on to the analysis, first I present two organizations, the ALKF and the MWF, and examine the NGOization of Islamic charity. Second, I analyse how this process affects the ways in which organizations make claims to legitimacy among different stakeholders. Next, I give attention to how, in this process, the organizations combine different sources of authority. I conclude by discussing how, by balancing different sources of authority, the organizations become 'Muslim NGOs'.

### **Islamic charity, aid, and development**

Charity is central to Islamic doctrine and Muslims' religious practice. There are a number of very concrete institutions for giving charity detailed in the Quran, including the obligatory *zakat* and several forms of voluntary almsgiving, including *sadqa* (Benthall 1999). Giving

charity is a personal religious act, and according to Islamic teachings, the right hand should not know what the left hand is doing. This makes it difficult to gauge the scale of Islamic charity in Pakistan and elsewhere (IRIN 2012). In the form of private donations, Islamic charity is not counted as part of development assistance. While much Islamic charity is given to family and neighbours, changing hands between individuals, considerable amounts of money are channelled through charities and aid organizations (Aga Khan Development Network [AKDN] 2000, Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy [PCP] 2010).

In Pakistan, organized Islamic charity takes many forms. It includes daily communal meals arranged at mosques and shrines, education offered through religious seminaries and schools, and a diversity of initiatives in health, micro-finance, social welfare and clean water provision by Islamic charity and aid organizations operating at local and national levels, some with transnational reach (Ghaus-Pasha and Iqbal 2003; Kirmani 2012; Strothmann 2013). Unlike among most other political parties in Pakistan, charity and welfare work has been a central feature of religio-political parties, many of whom run welfare organizations (Iqbal and Siddiqui 2008).

The welfare work of religio-political or ‘Islamist’<sup>3</sup> movements in the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia has seen increased scholarly attention over the past decade (Clark 2004; Göçmen 2014). However, these studies have a tendency to focus on political actors, which arguably provides a narrow view of Islamic aid organizations. As these actors are increasingly contributing and collaborating in the mainstream aid and development field, it becomes relevant to examine them as development actors.

This paper seeks to extend our knowledge about actors who are inspired by alternative normative religious and ideological frameworks, rather than to discuss those who dominate the mainstream field of aid and development. While many of today’s major humanitarian and development NGOs started as faith-based initiatives, the mainstream discourses and practices of aid and development have gradually adopted a largely secularised and material conception of development and approaches to aid (Agensky 2013), in which the ‘the religious’ is seen as separate from ‘the secular’ (Tomalin 2015a).

Although there has been an increased interest in so-called ‘faith-based organizations’ (FBOs) over the last decade (Clarke 2008; Clarke and Ware 2015), the role of religion for organizational legitimacy has received relatively scant attention. Notable exceptions exist: these include the work of Juul Petersen, who examines how transnational Muslim NGOs

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<sup>3</sup> I describe these organizations as ‘religio-political’ because it is a more descriptive term, and in order to avoid the connotations attached to the term ‘Islamist’ in contemporary politics and media debate.

give meaning to what they do and construct legitimate ‘ideologies of aid’ (Juul Petersen 2016, p. 8), and the work of Thaut, Gross Stein and Barnett, who examine the legitimacy dilemmas faced by Islamic Relief, a major Muslim NGO based in the United Kingdom (UK) (Thaut et al. 2012).

Situated at the peripheries of the international aid and development field, such organizations are rarely acknowledged as development actors, either because they are religio-political and seen as vote-seeking, or because their approach to development is seen as charity-oriented, or otherwise in conflict with the secular liberal norms dominant in the mainstream Western-origin aid and development tradition. I believe religio-political actors are important to study – precisely because they present alternative conceptions of aid, sometimes to the extent of outright rejection of a religious/secular divide. This approach departs from scholarship which analyses the potentials and pitfalls of religion in development, where some argue that the religious proximity of FBOs offers a comparative advantage vis-à-vis beneficiaries (Benthall 2012; De Cordier 2009) while others warn against jumping the ‘faith-based bandwagon’, cautioning against the dangers of endorsing the views of religious actors (De Kadt 2009). Instead, this paper recognizes religion as a potentially significant dimension of social reality which ought to be considered when attempting to understand organizational legitimacy as a social construction.

### **Studying the NGOization of Islamic charity**

The term ‘NGOization’ has been used to describe processes of professionalization, institutionalization, depoliticization and demobilization of social movements (Alvarez 2009; Chahim and Prakash 2014). As applied to Islamic charity, analysing how welfare organizations embedded in religio-political movements become development NGOs, the use of this word signifies not only changes in organizational structures or legal status, but also more profound changes in organizational discourses, and in the ways the organizations make claims to legitimacy.

The proliferation of the development NGO from the 1980s, together with its central role in the provision of humanitarian and development aid over the last three decades, has made the NGO a favoured, and contested, object of study (Banks et al. 2015). Two contrasting views of NGOs are often identified in the literature: NGOs as efficient service providers, and NGOs as civil society actors that can provide development alternatives (Mitlin et al. 2007). Although these views are very different understandings of NGOs, both are rather static and normative, and leave little room for actors ‘inspired by alternative

ideological or religious frameworks' (Hilhorst 2003, p. 9). A third view, adopted in this paper, shifts the focus to what it is that makes organizations into NGOs, seeing NGOs as complex actors, situated in particular social and political contexts (Hilhorst 2003; Juul Petersen 2016; Novak 2013). As pointed out by Hilhorst (2003 p. 6), the NGO label is more than a legal term; it is used as a 'claim-bearing label', through which organizations indicate that they conform to the expectations of a certain type of professional aid and development organization.

In her study of transnational Muslim NGOs, Marie Juul Petersen directs attention to the ways in which organizations 'produce, contest and present meaning, in the process making claims to legitimacy' (Juul Petersen, 2011 p. 31). Juul Petersen finds what she describes as a process of 'Islamization of aid' (Juul Petersen 2012, p. 4). By contrast, the current article focuses on the NGOization of Islamic charity. The article complements recent analysis of transnational Muslims NGOs, by shedding light on the actors originating in the Global South. These actors emerge as significant in the mainstream aid field but have been given less scholarly attention.

Inspired by the work of Marie Juul Petersen and Dorothea Hilhorst, I explore the interface between different discourses of aid, related to ideals and practices of Islamic charity on one hand, and the mainstream Western-origin tradition of humanitarian and development aid on the other (Juul Petersen, 2016). In this study, I do not take 'Islam', 'aid', or 'development' to be predefined and static concepts, but view them as constructions that emerge and are given meaning in particular contexts. Following Lincoln (2010), I take a view of religion as something that can be ascribed to social practice, meaning that anything can potentially be attributed religious significance, including aid and development.

As private actors, NGOs need to claim legitimacy to exist, to obtain the required legal status, and to secure both financial and moral support. Over the last decade, NGOs have seen increased criticism for failing to deliver, for not being representative and for lacking accountability (for a discussion, see Lister 2003). This often-referred-to 'crisis of legitimacy' has placed legitimacy questions at the centre of the study of NGOs in development and humanitarianism (Thaut et al. 2012; Walton et al. 2016).

In the study of NGOs, however, legitimacy has often been treated as a technical issue, with the emphasis placed on accountability, efficiency and representativeness (Lister 2003, p. 178). Departing from this technical approach to organizational legitimacy, scholars have drawn on insights from neo-institutional theory (Brinkerhoff 2005; Juul Petersen 2016; Lister 2003), which emphasise the importance of normative environments in shaping

organizational structure, content and behaviour (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Meyer and Scott 1983). Neo-institutional scholars assert that the legitimacy of an organization depends on its conformity, or resonance, with the discourses that are dominant among its stakeholders, both internal and external to an organization (Meyer and Scott 1983). Importantly, it is not the nature of the organization that gives legitimacy, but the stakeholders and constituents of an organization that accord legitimacy to it. Legitimacy is accorded to an organization if its social and moral purpose is consistent with the values and expectations of its stakeholders. As such, a change in discourse and practices in an organization or among its stakeholders, will affect the legitimacy of the organization. As Brinkerhoff points out, to be legitimate, organizations need to be ‘doing the right things’, ‘doing the things right’ and need to be seen as ‘right for the job’ (Brinkerhoff 2005, p.4).

Three broad dimensions of legitimacy are commonly distinguished in the neo-institutional literature: normative, pragmatic, and cognitive (Brinkerhoff 2005; Ossewaarde et al. 2008; Suchman 1995). Normative legitimacy is accorded to an organization when it reflects socially and morally acceptable or desirable norms, standards, and values. These can be formal law, and informal norms and codes of conduct Pragmatic legitimacy concerns the instrumental value of the organization for its stakeholders and constituents, and is accorded to an organization if it fulfils the needs and interests of these parties. Cognitive legitimacy is given when an organization pursues objectives and activities that are considered appropriate in a given context, seen as natural, and left unquestioned by stakeholders (Brinkerhoff 2005). An analysis of these three dimensions of legitimacy is useful to shed light on the significance of the normative environment in shaping organizational discourses, and in bringing out how organizations draw on different sources of authority when making claims to legitimacy among different stakeholders, in different contexts.

Discourse is here understood in a broad sense, not as a coherent and fixed set of ideas, but as assemblages of ideas, values and practices produced and reproduced in the interface between diverse social actors (Long 2001, p. 18). Following Grillo, ‘a discourse [of development, for example] identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it’ (Grillo 1997, p. 13). As such, discourse influences the institutional environments in which organizations exist. To be legitimate, organizations need to conform to dominant discourses of aid and development existing in particular contexts (Lister 2003, p. 188). An organization’s legitimacy may change – be strengthened or diminished – as the normative, pragmatic, and cognitive understandings of aid and development change (Lister 2003, p. 187). Organizations,

however, are not only passively shaped by external factors, but can also act to enhance their legitimacy by responding to stakeholders' expectations. One way organizations can achieve this is by aligning with established authority through association with particular forms of knowledge, text, and symbols (Lister 2003; Meyer and Rowan 1983).

### **Context, cases and methods**

The ALKF and the MWF are two of the largest and best-established Islamic aid organizations in Pakistan. The ALKF originates in the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan's oldest Islamist party established in 1941, and in the religio-political ideologies of its founder, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi (Nasr 1994). The MWF is part of the Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI), a 'neo-Sufi' religious organization established in Pakistan in 1980 by religious scholar and politician Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri (Philippon 2014). While the organizations represent two different Islamic traditions, both are modern Islamic revivalist movements, which can be seen as working to advance modern Islamic states and societies. Hence, the organizations represent a specific subset of Islamic aid organizations with religio-political ties and are not representative of all Islamic charity-based actors in Pakistan. Like Islamist organizations elsewhere, they predominantly mobilize among the educated urban middle class and other elites (Iqtidar 2011; Philippon 2012). In this respect they are not unlike secular NGOs, which are also commonly run by the middle class and elites (Bano 2008). Originating in Pakistan, both movements have spread through the Pakistani diaspora around the world, and form part of complex transnational networks.<sup>4</sup>

Both the MWF and the ALKF are part of religious movements promoting 'gender-traditional' ideologies (Burke 2012) where men and women have different but complementary roles, rights, and duties. As such, both organizations practise gender segregation<sup>5</sup>, and although the organizations provide assistance to women and men alike, both the MWF and the ALKF are staffed by men only. The organizations are collaborating with the respective movements' women's organizations (the Minhaj Women League and the Al Khidmat Women Trust) in the implementation of activities.<sup>6</sup>

The current article is based on multi-sited, qualitative fieldwork in Pakistani Punjab, Oslo, and London, carried out in the period 2012–2015. It draws on a total of 72 interviews.

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on the transnational organization of Islamic charity see article 2 in this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> While gender segregation is uncommon among NGOs in Pakistan, most political party structures are segregated and women's political activism is commonly organized through separate women's wings (Sahi, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of gender dimensions of Islamic charity and development in these organizations see article 3 in thesis.

Thirty are semi-structured (15 with men and 15 with women) associated with the two religio-political movements in Pakistan, and 16 are with individuals (12 with men and 4 with women) who work in other NGOs and for the Government of Pakistan. The data from Pakistan is supplemented by 26 interviews in other countries, with people mainly of Pakistani origin who are associated with the two movements. In Oslo, 24 interviews (12 with men and 12 with women) took place, and the last two interviews were both with men in London, during the same period. The study also draws on written material made available by the organizations, on information from the websites and social media, as well as observation from visits to the organizations' offices, project sites and events. I have interviewed workers and volunteers about their ideas about development, their aims and activities, the history of the organizations, their relationship to other actors, their personal backgrounds and their motivation for working in the organizations. This study is based on how the organizations and the interviewees working in these organizations present themselves and what they do. As such, it is a study of how the organizations make claims to organizational legitimacy; it is not an analysis of their ability to gain or maintain legitimacy. While an analysis of the perspectives of the beneficiaries would merit interest, it lies outside the scope of this study.

### **Catching up: from Islamic charity to aid and development**

The ALKF originates in the relief efforts of JI activists on behalf of refugees fleeing from India to Pakistan during partition in 1947 (Nasr 1994). Initially, income from selling animal hides collected during Eid ul Adha (the annual ritual animal sacrifice) was used to support welfare projects. The MWF is the welfare organization of Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI). The welfare and charity activities of Minhaj-ul-Quran were initially started in Pakistan under the Minhaj Welfare Society in 1989. Members of the MQI in Pakistan and the diaspora – in the UK, Norway and elsewhere – donated money to feed 'the poor' during the month of fasting (Ramadan), and had the ritual animal sacrifice (*qurbani*) at Eid ul Adha arranged through the welfare society. The income from the animal skins sold afterwards was used for welfare. Starting out as distributors of peoples' alms and facilitators of religious ritual, the activities of the two organizations were closely linked to the traditional Islamic institutions for giving charity. This has changed in the process of NGOization.

In the NGOization of Islamic charity, we can depict four distinct trends, which are also identifiable in the two organizations. These are: (i) a shift in self (re)presentation from partisan movement-oriented welfare organizations to neutral providers of aid; (ii) a change in focus of activities from charity-based community-welfare to humanitarian aid and

development; (iii) a shift from volunteerism to employment of salaried development professionals; and (iv) a broadening of funding sources, from relying almost exclusively on community members, to reaching out to broader donor bases, including institutional donors.

*From party to impartiality*

Welfare and social justice have been central to the ideologies of both the JI and MQI, as ways of mobilizing voters, but also as demonstrating commitment and practising movement ideology (Bano 2012, p. 88). In the case of the JI, as described by the movement's main ideologue, Maududi, at a party conference in the context of the 1958 elections in Pakistan, the importance of welfare work is revealing (cited in Bano 2012, p. 88): 'First of all it brings intellectual change in people; second [it] organises them in order to make them suitable for the movement; thirdly, it reforms society through social and humanitarian work; and finally it endeavours to change the leadership'.

Both the ALKF and the MWF have their origins in religio-political movements and their political parties. The ALKF was officially registered as an NGO with the Government of Pakistan in 1990. Since 2004, the ALKF has not had any formal association with the JI, yet the informal ties between them remain strong. In contrast to the ALKF's official disassociation from the political party, the MWF is an integrated part of the MQI's overall organizational structure. In Pakistan, the MWF main office is located in the MQI Markaz in Lahore, the movement's spiritual and organizational headquarters. In the MWF, the London office has been established as a UK charity, with the other European diaspora branches functioning as fundraising offices.

From having identities closely tied to religio-political movements, the organizations are now presenting themselves as global humanitarian actors. The transformation from community welfare organizations to NGOs involves a change in organizational identity, particularly in the ways the organizations present themselves to external audiences. Today, the ALKF introduces itself as an organization that is 'dedicated to humanitarian services'.<sup>7</sup> The MWF presents itself as a 'worldwide humanitarian development organization'.<sup>8</sup> Moving into the mainstream aid and development field and positioning themselves as legitimate NGOs, both organizations have changed the ways they perceive and present themselves. One MWF staff member explained:

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<sup>7</sup> Al Khidmat Foundation website <http://al-khidmatfoundation.org/> (accessed 3 February 2013).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.minhajwelfare.org/our-aims-and-objectives/> (accessed 1 June 2016).



MWF, we are not a religious organization, we are faith-based organization. We perceive our self as a worldwide humanitarian organization. We don't distinguish by Muslims or non-Muslims.

According to ALKF, they similarly 'provide services to all, without discrimination'.<sup>9</sup> From being welfare organizations focusing on the local predominantly Muslim community, both organizations have consciously included Christians and Hindus among beneficiaries in Pakistan, and have expanded programme areas to include activities outside Pakistan (such as relief response to Haiti and Japan, and support to victims of conflict in Syria and Palestine). This change in self-(re)presentation is a clear break with their earlier identity as community welfare organizations, catering mainly to followers of the same faith. In this way, the organizations can be seen as aligning themselves with the core principles in mainstream aid culture: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.<sup>10</sup> Yet, there are other areas where alignment with universalistic frameworks remains problematic. The institutionalization of gender norms of segregation and complementarity in the organizations, for example, are areas where both organizations clearly break with norms of gender equality dominant among actors in the mainstream aid and development field (Tomalin 2015b).

*From 'community welfare' to 'relief and development'*

Originally the activities of ALKF and the MWF related to distribution of food, clothes and gifts for Eid, qurbani meats, blankets and clothes in the winter, cash grants to people in dire economic situations, dowry boxes for young couples to get married, and funding for the construction of mosques. Gradually, the organizations have expanded their welfare activities and built up extensive and specialized sectoral programmes, shifting the focus of activities to humanitarian relief, as well as to long-term development through education and health. The ALKF is also offering micro-finance, and support for entrepreneurship and business development. The original focus on purely charity-oriented welfare work has been reduced to being one of many programme areas, now labelled as 'community services' and 'seasonal activities'. This signals a change, in ways of thinking about and practising aid – to include notions both of immediate needs – and longer-term societal development through

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<sup>9</sup> Al Khidmat Foundation website <http://al-khidmatfoundation.org/> (accessed 3 February 2013).

<sup>10</sup> The key humanitarian principles, first adopted by the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent at its 20th international conference in Vienna in 1965. The principle of impartiality demands that assistance should be based on need and that it should not discriminate on the basis of nationality, race, religious belief, gender, political opinions, or other considerations (Barnett 2005).

investments in education, income generation, and health. A common view of individuals interviewed in both organizations was that there is a need for the distribution of food, but that this alone is not enough; as one manager put it: 'it will not affect the needed change'. A member of the ALKF leadership talked about the changing organizational priorities in the following terms:

Al-Khidmat, right now, is focusing more in development sector and we are making programs for advocacy as well. We realize that no matter how big an NGO is it is not possible to resolve all the problems. So we have to go into advocacy so that we can impact the government sector to make the right decisions for an issue [...] like floods. We have a few people, a few experts, working on how to reduce the risk of flood in Pakistan. The report is in progress and we will move forward to the elected members, members of provincial assemblies, members of national assembly, asking them to put that into the policies and so on; so we are moving forward in that manner.

The ALKF is positioning itself in the mainstream aid field, working alongside other humanitarian NGOs in relief efforts, and in lobbying the government to make a longer-term impact. It is a member of the NGO coordination body in Pakistan, and has recently been accredited by the Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy (the main initiative to vet the credibility of NGOs in Pakistan). It is also actively engaged in transnational initiatives with likeminded Muslim actors (such as the International Federation for Relief and Development).

In comparison to the ALKF, the MWF is smaller and more closely integrated with the transnational religious organization, MQI. However, the MWF has also expanded its activities from charity-based handouts to longer-term development-oriented activities in health and education. The changes in the MWF are largely driven by its UK office, which has developed into a European headquarter. The UK office has rebranded the MWF, given it a new image, presenting it as a modern humanitarian organization. In the UK, the MWF compares itself with the larger, well-established Islamic Relief and Muslims Aid. To move into the mainstream aid and development field, and into new domains like advocacy, new knowledge and expertise is needed. To meet these requirements, both ALKF and MWF have professionalized.

#### *From volunteers to professional staff*

Being the welfare organizations of religio-political movements, both the ALKF and the MWF were first created and run by volunteers. The ALKF claims to draw from a pool of some 100,000 volunteers across Pakistan, predominantly JI party members and sympathisers

(Kirmani and Zaidi 2010). Closely linked to the religio-political movements of the JI and MQI, the welfare, relief, and development work of the ALKF and the MWF has been tightly integrated with the other activities of these movements,<sup>11</sup> focusing in particular on spreading the teachings of Islam (*dawa*), imparting religious training (*tarbiyat*), and with more direct political activism. Volunteering is seen as *sadqa*, a way of doing good deeds, a way of practising religion, and of sacrificing ‘in the way of God’.

A central part of the professionalization has been the employment of development experts with experience from relief and development work and the training of volunteers. Membership in the religio-political movements is not a requirement for working with either the ALKF or the MWF, and both organizations have non-party member development professionals and volunteers. At the time of research, the ALKF Pakistan had some 60 salaried staff, while the MWF had five full-time employees at the Pakistan office and five at the UK office. Although the number of salaried professional staff is small compared to the large number of volunteers, both the ALKF and the MWF are introducing a new type of institutional stakeholder to their organizations. By employing development professionals with degrees in development and experience from the aid and development sector, they are bringing new norms and standards to the organizations. The employment of salaried professionals challenges the ideals of volunteering as *sadqa* and self-sacrifice, even though the employees emphasized that their salaries were lower than in other NGOs, and were therefor in keeping with Islamic ideals of modesty and simplicity.

#### *From alms to institutional funding?*

Unlike many NGOs in Pakistan which commonly rely on institutional donor funding (Bano 2008, p. 2300), the activities of the ALKF and the MWF have primarily been funded by Islamic charity, in the form of *zakat* and *sadqa*, the sale of *qurbani* hides, and other regular contributions from party members (Bano 2012, p. 89). In recent years, however, both organizations have expanded their funding bases. The ALKF mobilizes funds through the JI organizational structure in Pakistan, through members’ contributions, and through local charity and fundraising events – but also through online campaigns and networks of likeminded Muslims in Pakistani diaspora communities in the Gulf, Europe and North America. With web pages in Urdu, English, Arabic and Turkish, the ALKF is proactively reaching out to potential sympathisers and supporters through registered charity

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<sup>11</sup> This is still the case in the all-women organizations. For a discussion see article 3 in this thesis.

organizations, individual donations, and mosque-based networks.<sup>12</sup> The ALKF has expanded its donor base to include funding from institutional donors, although in practice the organization has received limited funding from mainstream donor agencies. At the time of research, the ALKF had received small-scale funding for flood relief from the Government of Japan, a donor government seen by the organization as politically neutral. Both the ALKF and the MWF are careful who they partner with; they want to be seen as independent, particularly from the politics of the United States (US) and UK governments. The ALKF has expanded its collaboration with the government and with United Nations (UN) organizations as well as national and international NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance and is taking active part in humanitarian coordination fora. In the words of one ALKF employee:

We have our own style of work, but we see that we cannot work alone ... We have started the liaison with government departments; we have become member of the National Disaster Risk Reduction forum, with all the international and international organization that works on disaster risk reduction in the country ... We are trying to become member of the National Humanitarian Network ... by the will of God [Insha'Allah], hopefully, in the future, we will become a member of that network.

By contrast, the MWF as an integrated part of the MQI organizational structure, is still largely funded by individual donations channelled through the MQI local organizational chapters in Pakistan and the diaspora. But the MWF is also expanding its donor base, seeking to attract donors from outside the movement, particularly in the diaspora. The UK office of the MWF has introduced new fundraising events that are not linked to religious festivals (including annual fundraising challenges such as walking the Great Wall of China, or climbing the tallest mountain in the UK).

As this analysis reveals, the NGOization of Islamic charity involves the processes of both professionalization and depoliticization, with the organizations presenting themselves as modern and professional aid organizations who provide neutral and impartial assistance to people in need. In many ways, the NGOization of Islamic charity resembles the institutionalization of development (Boli and Thomas 1999) and humanitarianism (Barnett 2005), where discourses of aid and development have been institutionalised through processes of professionalization, standardization, and specialization. Both organizations have professionalized by hiring development experts in management positions and conducting training of volunteers. They have also standardized their operations by adopting ISO

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<sup>12</sup> See discussion in article 2 in this thesis.

standards, introduced new management practices and sought accreditation from recognized authorities, and specialized by dividing the work into sectoral programmes and developing expertise in specific areas. But the NGOization process has not only affected the organization of Islamic charity, it has also involved profound changes in the ways of practising, conceiving, and talking about what they do. From being distributors of alms to the local community, the organizations have now become aid and development NGOs.

### **Claiming legitimacy: religious and professional authority**

The NGOization of Islamic charity has introduced new stakeholders to the organizations, both external to the organizations in terms of partners and donors from the mainstream development industry, and internal to the organizations through the employment of development experts. In the following section, by analysing how the two organizations lay claim to legitimacy, I argue that to meet the expectations of diverse stakeholders, the organizations seek to combine multiple sources of authority: religious and professional.

The formal development NGO can, as an ideal type, be described as operating within a secular frame, emphasising adherence to key humanitarian principles, and as following institutional norms established to ensure efficiency, accountability and representation (Barnett 2005). Aid is to be given based on need, not on particular solidarity bonds (such as those based on religion or nationality, for example). In order to be legitimate humanitarian and development actors, organizations need to adhere to these shared norms and standards, framed in a shared language and set of symbols. These norms constitute what can be described as ‘professional authority’ (Juul Petersen 2016, p. 74).

As opposed to the professional authority central to aid and development discourse and practice, Islamic charity can be seen as legitimized by religious authority, claims to transcendental power and truth (Lincoln 2010). As welfare organizations integrated into religio-political movements, the ALKF and the MWF have claimed legitimacy by being appropriate distributors of alms. Both organizations were founded by charismatic religious leaders, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi and Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri respectively. The teachings of the movement’s leaders have been actively used by the organizations to attract volunteers and to motivate people to donate. The organizations make extensive use of media in the forms of print, audio, video, and online. The ALKF and MWF websites present their programmes and activities, but also provide detailed information about various religious duties and rituals, and specify how, what, and to whom they apply. Both organizations offer online donation services, where, with a click, a donor can determine whether what they give is zakat or for

another specific purpose. Religious teachings, text, and symbols constitute an important source of authority employed by the organizations to claim legitimacy among their traditional constituencies, mainly members and sympathizers of the religio-political movements and individual donors.

*Normative legitimacy: managing aid and alms*

As asserted in the new institutional literature, normative legitimacy is accorded to an organization when it reflects socially and morally acceptable or desirable norms, standards, and values (Brinkerhoff 2005). For aid and development NGOs, normative legitimacy is commonly produced through formal legal requirements (such as legal registration or permits to operate), norms related to managerial practices, accountability and representation (Lister 2003), and norms related to approaches to aid and development (what kind of aid, development, and for whom). In order to claim normative legitimacy, as do NGOs, from other actors in the aid and development sector (for example, governments and donor agencies), the ALKF and the MWF have professionalised; they have hired new staff and trained volunteers, and introduced new operating standards and procedures. They are adopting organizational practices, principles, and ways of doing things from the mainstream aid and development discourse and practice. At the same time, both organizations are still managers of Islamic charity.

In the Islamic tradition, there exists a set of very concrete institutions for giving charity, which provides directions for how, when, and to whom different types of alms should be given and managed. In the case of zakat, for example, eight categories of recipients are detailed in the Quran, the first two being ‘the poor’ and ‘the needy’.<sup>13</sup> Who the ‘poor’ and ‘needy’ are is defined by the *nisab*, the threshold distinguishing who has to pay – or receive – zakat.<sup>14</sup>

When people give Islamic charity, it is often for specific purposes, with particular intentions in mind. Intention (*niyat*) is central in Islam; it is the intention of a person’s action that is measured by God. The intention can be to help the poor, relieve suffering and contribute to social justice, but also to please God. Doing good deeds – like donating or

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<sup>13</sup> The categories of worthy recipients of zakat outlined in the Quran (Surah 60. verse 9): ‘*The alms are only for the Fuqara’ (the poor), and Al-Masakin (the needy) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allah’s Cause, and for the wayfarer (a traveler who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah.*’

<sup>14</sup> Those with an annual economic surplus above the *nisab* are required to pay 2.5% of this as zakat, those with annual economic surplus below the *nisab* qualify as recipients of zakat. The *nisab* is calculated based on the value of 3 ounces (87.48 grams) of gold or 21 ounces (612.36) of silver, thus changing with market value.

volunteering – is understood to give religious rewards, and is a means to attain paradise in the afterlife (*akhira*). As such, giving charity, volunteering, or working for a Muslim NGO is not only for helping people here and now, but is simultaneously an investment by the donors in the life ‘hereafter’. Ensuring that the money is utilized as intended is the responsibility of the intermediary – in this case, an NGO – which is an intermediary not only between the donors and the beneficiaries, but also between the donors and God. It becomes the responsibility of the organization to make sure the alms are used for their intended purposes. This is particularly significant in the case of zakat, which can only be used for concrete purposes detailed in the Quran, but equally important when people make donations for other specific purposes. This gives certain direction for how donations can be used and requires particular financial managerial setups, as explained by one ALKF manager:

In our fund management, one thing is very clear: money that is earmarked to a specific project, the money will go to that project. And zakat is a very sensitive issue. When people give zakat, we put it in a special zakat account. Zakat has its own spending account. Like yesterday someone gave us 27,000 rupees, 7000 was for the qurbani [ritual slaughter], 20,000 was for zakat. So as soon as they marked it, we put it in a separate zakat account.

For the ALKF and the MWF, these religious and transcendental dimensions are at least as important, if not more, than the technical aspects of financial transparency and accountability expected by professional NGOs. It illustrates how the rules and ‘ways of doing things’ are important in the management of alms, and how ‘the right way of doing things’ differs between institutional environments in which these organizations are situated. In order to claim normative legitimacy among new and old stakeholders, the organizations need to adhere to the norms and standards of professional aid and development NGOs, while adhering to Islamic principles.

Whether non-Muslims can be recipients of zakat is an area of contention, interpreted variously by Islamic scholars, and by different Islamic aid organizations.<sup>15</sup> Scholars of the Hanafi school, dominant in South Asia, commonly interpret zakat as only permissible for Muslims. Both the ALKF and the MWF subscribe to this interpretation, which can be seen as breaking with key humanitarian principles of aid provision without discrimination. As pointed out by Kirmani and Zaidi (2010, p. 18), determining who are considered worthy recipients of zakat can have clear implications for the work of organizations. The ALKF

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<sup>15</sup> The UK-based Islamic Relief for example, does not restrict zakat to only Muslim recipients (see Khan 2012, p. 98).

claims not to discriminate on the basis of religion and to provide assistance to all, using funding sources other than zakat – such as sadqa, for instance – to fund their activities directed towards non-Muslims. Here, the organization has devised a strategy that works as long as it is operating in a context where the recipients are mainly Muslim.

*Pragmatic legitimacy: development aid vs. religious practice*

Pragmatic legitimacy concerns the instrumental value an organization has for its stakeholders and constituents. It is granted to an organization on condition that the organization fulfils the needs and interests of the specified actors (Suchman 1995). Humanitarian and development NGOs claim pragmatic legitimacy by delivering aid. Through helping people in need, offering short-term relief or longer-term development, NGOs claim pragmatic legitimacy by being the intermediaries between donors and beneficiaries, and by being efficient, effective, and appropriate deliverers of aid. Muslim NGOs also need to be efficient providers of aid, but they have additional otherworldly functions. Helping the poor and people in need is an obligation in Islam, and doing welfare work commonly seen as sadqa, as performing good deeds. Giving to charity is a religious practice that both benefits the individuals in need, and gives religious rewards to those who help. The ALKF and the MWF not only provide a means for giving alms, but they also provide their members, workers, and volunteers with ways to practise religion. Religious motivations were significant for the people I interviewed who worked in these organizations; several of the volunteers emphasized the moral obligation to volunteer, and underlined how doing service is part of being a good Muslim and of belonging to the religious movements. For these stakeholders, religion constitutes a powerful source of authority, which the organizations make use of when making claims to pragmatic legitimacy among their traditional support base. To claim pragmatic legitimacy in a changed institutional context with new and old stakeholders, the organizations need to be seen as efficient deliverers of aid, providing ways for donors to relieve people of suffering and contribute to societal development here and now, while at the same time offering ways to practise religion, which is an investment in the future, so to speak.

*Cognitive legitimacy: natural managers of alms and aid*

Cognitive legitimacy is accorded when an organization pursues objectives and activities that are considered appropriate in a given context. To be awarded cognitive legitimacy in the aid and development field, NGOs need to be seen as natural providers of aid; they need to



acknowledged as efficient (cost effective) and effective (delivering what they propose) in appropriate ways (reaching those in need), while adhering to key principles of neutrality and non-discrimination. When NGOs are not seen to live up to these ideals, they risk losing legitimacy. In order to be regarded as legitimate by other development actors (the Government of Pakistan, international NGOs, and donor agencies), Islamic aid organizations need to prove that they are not front groups for terrorist organizations, but legal and genuine development NGOs (following established rules and standards); that they are not just distributing charity, but are efficient deliverers of relief and development; and that they are not partisan vote-seekers, but are neutral providers of aid without discrimination, embracing the key principles of humanitarian assistance.

While the legitimacy of Islamic charities has been questioned, mainstream ‘secular’ NGOs seem to be lacking cognitive legitimacy in the Pakistan context. These NGOs have a poor reputation in Pakistan (Grünenfelder 2013); they are frequently criticized on ideological grounds for being ‘agents of the West’, as advancing anti-Muslim interests, for not delivering what they promise, and for being institutions of personal enrichment with individual leaders profiting (Bano 2008). This can be seen as being in direct conflict with the ideals of simplicity and self-sacrifice held high by the Muslim NGOs. If Muslim NGOs wish to claim cultural and cognitive legitimacy among their traditional stakeholders (members and sympathisers of the religious movements) and among the broader Muslim public, they need to be more than NGOs. While professionalism is recognized by the organizations as a requirement of the day, it is not enough: the organizations also need to be seen as ‘Islamic’. To do so, the organizations emphasise what they consider to be core Islamic values such as modesty and simplicity, self-sacrifice and volunteering; they offer more modest salaries; they do not drive flashy cars. To claim cognitive legitimacy, the organizations present themselves as modest and modern Islamic alternatives to the mainstream development NGOs.

Drawing attention to the normative, pragmatic, and cognitive dimensions of legitimacy helps to bring out the multifaceted and complex nature of claiming legitimacy. Analytical distinctions are useful when trying to make sense of this complexity, although they are difficult to apply in practice since normative, pragmatic, and cognitive dimensions of legitimacy overlap (Brinkerhof 2005). Even so, the analysis in this study reveals how legitimacy changes with context, vis-à-vis the organizations’ new and old stakeholders, over time. Importantly, it draws attention to the contextual and relational nature of legitimacy, and

the significance of normative environments – religious and ideological – in the construction of legitimacy.

### **Managing change: becoming Muslim NGOs**

The ALKF and the MWF have become complex organizations, advancing a diverse set of norms and procedures, fulfilling multiple functions, and projecting multifaceted organizational identities. In order to manage organizational change, the ALKF and the MWF are both adopting strategies through which they can respond to diverse stakeholders' expectations.

It has been well established by institutional theorists (such as Meyer and Rowan 1983), that organizational legitimacy can be enhanced through identification with language and symbols. In both ALKF and MWF religious knowledge, texts, and symbols have been complemented by technical knowledge and management expertise associated with development professionalism, drawing on the language and imagery of mainstream development and humanitarian aid. Where Islamic texts and symbols were used to inspire and justify action and appeals, reference is now also made to development statistics and UN campaigns. One example of this is the focus on clean water. Giving water to the thirsty is a central teaching in Islam, and providing clean water is a common undertaking of Islamic charity organizations. Over the years, the ALKF has established some 2766 water wells and 1141 hand pumps. According to the AKLF website, 'providing water in this way is a very good way of offering a Sadaqah Jariyah [continuous charity] as the donor can expect to reap Allah's blessings for as long as the well supplies water'.<sup>16</sup> On the organization's new website, clean water is also linked to the UN World Water Day. Importantly, the organization is not discarding the Islamic frame, but is combining it with professional development knowledge, language, and symbols. Taking a traditional practice of Islamic charity and reframing it in the language of development can be seen as a way of 'developmentalising' Islamic charity (Juul Petersen 2016), combining elements from the two different traditions.

Both the ALKF and the MWF are operating on multiple levels and in different contexts, in Pakistan and abroad. In Pakistan, the MWF is known as a provider of welfare in the neighbourhood where the volunteers live, as a development actor in health and education, and as a provider of relief in times of emergencies. In addition, the MWF has

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<sup>16</sup><http://al-khidmatfoundation.org/clean-water/#sthash.0MPdCCXb.dpuf> (accessed 18 January 2016)

transnational reach through its branches in the UK and elsewhere. Similarly, within the ALKF there are differences between the way the organization works at its headquarters, where it positions itself as a central actor in the mainstream aid and development field, and the way the organization works at the grassroots level through networks of party workers and ideological sympathisers.

In both organizations, the change in discourse is most evident in the ways the organizations communicate with external stakeholders and audiences through their websites and printed material, where they present themselves as modern and professional NGOs, aligned with key humanitarian principles. The ALKF and the MWF claim legitimacy by being professional aid organizations, drawing on professional authority. Yet, in both organizations, the old stakeholders (the members and sympathizers with the religious movements) are still important constituencies; they are the volunteers who enable the organization to respond quickly across Pakistan, and they remain the principal funders of the organizations' activities. To these stakeholders, religion – as doctrine, symbols, and practice – remains an important source of authority, which the organizations draw on when they make claims to legitimacy among their traditional support base.

To manage organizational change, the MWF in the UK is applying a two-pronged strategy. To the internal audience, the leader is presented as a religious scholar, while to the external audience in the UK and Europe, they have made a conscious decision to portray the spiritual and political leader of MQI, Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, as one of their managers put it as: 'a humanitarian and philanthropist. Not as an Islamic scholar'. This initiative came from the UK office, and resembles that of other Muslim NGOs in the UK such as Islamic Relief, which have adopted the language of the development industry (Juul Petersen 2016). This resembles what has been described as a need to be bilingual, to master the languages of both development and of Islam (Khan 2012; Juul Petersen 2016). As seen in the case of the MWF, the organizations in this study employ different language, texts, and symbols to claim legitimacy among diverse stakeholders in different contexts. The way the organizations present its leader to different audiences brings out the contextual nature of organizational legitimacy and reveals how the organizations are interpreting and appropriating the meaning of Islamic charity, aid, and development in different contexts, drawing on symbols, language and authority both from Islamic traditions and from mainstream aid and development discourse.

### **Conclusion: experts of Islamic aid**

In this article I have argued that the NGOization of Islamic charity involves processes of professionalization and depoliticization, and consequently, a change in the ways of practising, as well as conceiving of Islamic charity, aid, and development. In order to claim legitimacy as providers of aid in changing institutional contexts, it appears that the organizations need to be both ‘NGOs’ and ‘Islamic’. Combining ideals and practices of Islamic charity with principles and practices from mainstream aid and development, the organizations draw on both religious and professional sources of authority. In the process they re-interpret and give new meaning to Islamic charity, aid, and development; in effect, they become Muslim NGOs. The analysis of the NGOization of Islamic charity has brought out the importance of normative frameworks in shaping organizational legitimacy.

For practising Muslims, giving charity is a religious duty and an integral part of religious practice. Helping the poor, the needy, widows, and orphans, as emphasised in the religious texts, is ‘the right thing to do’. Islamic aid organizations can be seen as knowing ‘how to do it right’, having the right procedures in place to manage alms in accordance with the religious prescriptions. As such, Muslim NGOs are ‘right for the job’, by being professionals in aid and development *and* by being Islamic.

Changing their field of engagement from charity-based handouts to humanitarian aid and development, Muslim NGOs become experts of Islamic aid: they are not only ‘doing good’, but they are doing it ‘the modern Islamic way’. They present themselves as modern and professional, while they at the same time advance what they consider key Islamic values and ways of being Muslim, which resonate with the organizations’ main supporters and sympathisers, members of the religious organizations and the broader Muslim public.

As this analysis has brought out, however, the organizations are becoming more complex and relate to a diverse set of stakeholders – both old and new – with different expectations. Through the process of NGOization, the organizations are making themselves legitimate among new stakeholders, reaching out beyond the party members to include broader, predominantly Muslim communities in Pakistan and its diaspora, but also in Turkey and the Gulf. Can these organizations be fully recognized by actors in the international field of aid and development if they continue with their institutionalized gender segregation, clearly breaking with the ideals of gender equality so central to mainstream development discourse and practice? And will they be able to reconcile the principle of non-discrimination with the interpretation of zakat rules common among South Asian Muslims? The changes in discourse and practices of aid present some potential dilemmas for these

religio-political aid organizations. As their organizational identity changes, the organizations will need to balance the interests of old and new stakeholders, and to negotiate their potentially conflicting norms and values. Whether they manage to keep their old constituencies, supporters, and the network of volunteers that is so central to the operational reach of the organization – while at the same time be recognized as legitimate providers of aid among mainstream aid and development actors – is yet to be seen. It will likely require cautious positioning vis-à-vis Western NGOs and donors, and a careful negotiation and management of the meaning given to Islamic charity, aid, and development.

Islamic traditions of charity provide a normative framework which links social practice with transcendental authority. As argued above, this framework is not static, but changing with context and over time. By applying an understanding of organizational legitimacy as multifaceted and socially constructed, the importance of contextual and relational aspects of legitimacy has been emphasized, which hitherto has been given only scant attention in NGO research. Studying the transformation of Islamic charity further reveals the continued significance of religion – including its moral and transcendental aspects – in the discourses, practices, and identities of Muslim NGOs.

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## Appendix

### Theme Guide Organizations (Norway, Pakistan, UK)

#### General

History of organization: when founded, by whom, for what purpose,  
Mission statement – goals  
Scale of operations and activities (national/local? small/big?)  
Employees: volunteers/professionals  
Estimated number of beneficiaries (particular groups?)  
Membership: membership/non-membership  
Donor relations: no donors/donors  
Leadership: charismatic leadership/elected leadership  
Relation to government: registered, dependent/ independent, pro/anti

#### Practice

Types of activities: immediate needs (welfare/relief) – development (poverty reduction/ structural change)  
Why these activities?( poverty reduction?)  
Who is it that you want to help? (beneficiaries') What problems are they facing? (Who are 'the poor'?) How are activities decided?  
(Religious content in activities?)  
(Use of faith symbols?)  
Gender differences?

#### Conceptions of poverty, poverty reduction, development and Islamic charity

Understandings of poverty? Poverty reduction? (Related to 'the poor' (*fakir*) and 'the needy' ( *miskin*) in the Quran?)  
'Development' vs. 'Islamic charity'?  
Gender differences?

#### Funding

Types of funding? (charity /grants?)  
Does the organization receive zakat or other Islamic charity? Why/Why not?  
Does the organization receive funding from typical development donor agencies? (National/International, Islamic/ non-Islamic?)  
How big part is funded by Islamic charity?  
Any limitations to what the Islamic charity funds can be used for?

#### Links to Islam

Would you define your organization as an 'Islamic charity'?  
Links to religious sects, Islamic charities?  
Religious parties/organizations/ mosques?  
Do you view your organization as similar/different to other (Islamic/non-Islamic) organizations?

#### Transnational dimensions

Transnational/cross-border? What is transferred? What flows?  
Funding - TN?  
Ideas (religion and knowhow) – is the organization part of international networks?  
Does the organization have branches elsewhere? Umbrella organizations? Thematic networks? Meetings? Informal networks?  
People – movement and belonging? Types of interaction? members, patrons, supporters, friends, boards members  
Who decides? Issues or conflicts?

#### Gender dimensions ( need to formulate the Qs)

“gendered division of labor”? women/ men in board? Women/ men involvement in collection of charity?  
Gender in project/programme activities?  
Ideas about gender equity? Women's rights?  
Empowerment?

#### Links to politics

Political /partisan/apartisan/apolitical (Reactive – proactive?)  
Ideology

#### Policy relevant

Can you think of ways that Islamic charity can be used to reduce poverty more effectively than it is today?

## Theme Guide Individuals (Norway)

### General

Year of birth, sex  
Personal history (family/migration)  
Language spoken

### Religion

Member of particular sect/mosque?  
Religious practice

### Economic

Education/occupation  
Job/income  
Investments

### Social

Voluntary work/Organizations

### Transnational ties

TN family ties  
Other transnational ties (educational/organizational/political)  
Frequency of visiting Pakistan

### About giving for charity

Can you tell me about the last time you gave for charity (what, who, how, when, where?)  
Do you give *zakat* and *sadaqa*? Other ways?  
Examples? (What, who, how, when, where? Individuals/organizations? Norway/Pakistan?)  
Why do you choose to give to these people/organizations? (Giver - recipient relationship/understandings of poverty)  
How is the money you give for charity spent?  
Do you decide yourself what the *zakat* should be used for? Is it important to you to decide how it is spent?

### Giving to Pakistan

Do you give to organizations in Pakistan?  
What channels? Why this channel?  
Do you give to organizations in Pakistan when there are appeals for help?

### Changes over time

Do you give regularly? Do you always give to the same people/organizations?  
Have the way you give charity changed (how, what, when to whom, to what purpose)? Do you know of people that used to give for charity that no longer gives? Why do you think so? Do you know of people that never used to give, but that has started giving?

### Individual – family

Does the family give together or do the husband and wife give individually?

### Generational differences

When did you start giving?  
When do think people normally start giving?  
Difference in giving young/old?

### Gender – differences

Do believe men and women have different roles, (entitlements or duties) in relation to giving to charity? Or in receiving charity?  
Do you think men and women give differently?

### Charity to people in Norway?

Are there people/organizations/causes that are deserving recipients of (Islamic) charity in Norway? Examples? Do you give to these? Why/Why not? Are there examples of organizations that are run on Islamic charity in Norway (organizations run by Pakistani diaspora, helping people in need in the diaspora, or other?) Do you give to (non-Islamic) organizations in Norway when there are appeals for help?

### About poverty (*ghurбат*)

Why do you give to the causes/people/organizations you give to?  
Who are the ‘poor and the needy’?  
Do you think *zakat* and *sadaqa* helps to reduce poverty?

### About development and charity

Is there a difference between charity (*khairat/khidmat/behbood*) and development (*taraqqi*)?

### Religious authority (on *zakat* and *sadaqa*)

If you need advice on what to give/how to give charity, who do you talk to?

### Policy relevance

What are the options available for giving Islamic charity among Pakistani migrants in Norway? What is the best way to give charity/help the poor? Could charity be organized in a different way? Role of the religious community vs. role of the state?

## Glossary

*Central terms from Urdu and Arabic.*

***akhira*** – afterlife.

***daii*** – one who teaches dawa.

***dars*** – religious lesson or discussion.

***dawa*** – calling or inviting people to Islam.

***din*** – ‘way of life’, sometime used for religion or faith.

***dupatta*** – loos shawl used as part of women’s *shalwar kamiz* in South Asia

***eid*** – the celebration marking the end of the fast.

***eid-ul-adha*** – the commemoration of the Prophet Ibrahim willing to offer his son Ismael.

***hijab*** - veil or headscarf.

***ijtihad*** - the tradition of independent reasoning and interpretation in Islam.

***imam*** – religious leader, the one who leads the prayer.

***Jamaat-e-Islami*** – ‘party of Islam, a religio-political part started by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi in India in 1941.

***khidmat*** – service.

***khawateen*** – women.

***meena bazaar*** – a bazaar traditionally arranged by women.

***niyat*** – intention.

***Minhaj-ul-Quran*** – ‘the method of the Quran’, a religious organization started by Dr Tahir ul Qadri in Pakistan in 1981.

***muhajir*** – term used to describe mainly Urdu speaking Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan after partition in 1947.

***niqab*** – a hijab that covers all but the eyes.

***phir*** – the common term for a Sufi saint in South Asia.

***pardah*** – literally means ‘curtain’, the institution of secluding women from men to enforce high standards of female modesty.

***Quran*** – the Holy Book of Muslims, believed to be the word of God.

***qurbani*** – the annual ritual sacrifice carried out at the *Eid-ul-Ada*.

***ramadan*** – the Islamic month of fasting.

***sadqa*** – voluntary charity, donations or good deeds.

***sadqa-e-jariya*** – continuous *sadqa*. The giver earns religious rewards as long as the recipient reaps benefits from the good deed.

***shalwar kamiz*** – traditional Pakistani two piece suite worn by men and women.

***Sharia*** – Islamic law.

***tarbiyat*** - religious training and moral self-fashioning of the individual.

***tariqa*** - Sufi brotherhood.

***tawassuf*** - intermediation between God and the world.

***ulema*** -Islamic scholars.

***umma*** –the global Muslim community.

***ushr*** – a levy on agricultural land.

***Wali Allah*** - ‘friend of God’.

***waqf*** (sg.)/ *awqaf* (pl.) – endowment.

***zakat*** – obligatory charity, sometimes described as a ‘religious tax’ ( commonly calculated as 2.5 % an individual’s annual surplus).

***zakat-ul-fitr*** - *small amount paid at the end of the fast* ( commonly calculated as the price of 3 kg of dates or barley).



## FORM 4.7 Errata

Correcting formal errors in the PhD thesis (cf. section 15.3-2 in the PhD regulations)

The PhD candidate may after submitting the thesis apply to correct formal errors in the thesis. An application to correct formal errors must be submitted no less than four (4) weeks before the disputation. Such an application can be made only once.

Thesis title:	With faith in development: Islamic charity as development in practice?
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Page number	Paragraph	Change from	Change to
ii		89	99
14	second	these	this
14	second	contradicts	contradict
31	second		Indent inserted
37	heading	bold	italic
39	fourth	actor oriented	actor orientated
41	third	context	contest
41	third	in	and
42	third	perspectives	perspective
53	second		Indent inserted
55	second		punctuation
86	title article 4	NGOization of Islamic charity: Becoming Muslim NGOs	NGOization of Islamic charity: Claiming legitimacy in changing institutional contexts
156	first	be	have
156	first	,	deleted

This form will be signed by the PhD candidate and the main supervisor and must be sent to the faculty for approval. The approved errata must be archived in the PhD candidate's doctoral archive and must be attached to the final thesis print version as the last page of the thesis.

### Date and signature:

PhD candidate (Author):	 18/5.2017
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Main supervisor:	
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Errata approved by the faculty: Yes  No

For the faculty:	
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