Giving Meaning to Faith and the Sacred

Case Study on Changes and Continuities of Religion and the Secular within Cordaid and ICCO

Rozemarijn Diepenbroek
S2706261

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Supervisor – dr. B.E. Bartelink
Second reader – dr. J. Tarusarira

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on how Cordaid and ICCO, two religious non-governmental organizations, that are inspired on Catholic (Cordaid) and Protestant (ICCO) faith, maintain and adapt their religious identity in the face of powerful secularizing forces, and is based on the notion that religion and the secular are closely intertwined in the development organization. This thesis aims to deviate from an inherent dualistic understanding of religion and the secular and therefore employs the work of Barnett and Stein, who offer a relational approach to religion and the secular. In the core of their work, the authors argue that the secularization thesis is false and that rather, processes of sanctification of the secular and secularization of religious can be observed (Barnett and Stein, 2012). Founded on this operational framework, this thesis focuses on Cordaid and ICCO, as they both have long-standing traditions in the Netherlands – they have undergone the many phases of development and witnessed changing discourses of religion and secularity for development – and are therefore of particular interest for this study. On the basis of an historical account of the relationship between religion and development, particular attention is given to forces of professionalization and rationalization within Cordaid and ICCO, as well as how the organizations have changed and continue to give meaning to faith and the sacred. The central argument of this thesis is that while Cordaid and ICCO have been under financial pressure from primarily the Dutch government and while they constantly have to rebalance their positions in their particular networks, this also has led the organizations to focus on their (shared) humanitarian and religious values. Not only can processes of sanctification be found in the organizations, this may be what has made a fusion between the religious organizations possible.

List of Abbreviations

ICCO   Inter-church Organization for Development Cooperation

ISS   Institute of Social Studies

MDC   Ministry of Development Cooperation

MFSII   Co-Financing System II

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

NOVIB   Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand (Dutch Organization for
            International Aid)

PVV   Partij voor de Vrijheid (Freedom Party)

UN   United Nations

WFDD   World Faiths Development Dialogue

WOII   World War II

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1. Introduction

Religion has not always been present in development discourses and policies. Until the turn of the century, the field of development largely neglected the importance of faith from its efforts and felt at unease with religion. Heavily influenced by theories of modernization and secularization that evolved directly following the end of WOII, the field considered religion as counter-developmental and the relationship was ''fragile and intermittent at best, critical and confrontational at worst'', to speak in the words of Marshall and Keough (2004, 1). The last twenty years, however, a gradually increasing focus on religion as a fundamental aspect of people's lives and on the importance of religion for development can be witnessed. The field of development has widened its space for thought about religion and today, the presence of religion through faith-based organizations is indisputable; their voices are increasingly being heard by secular organizations; and religious beliefs and teachings impact development efforts (Clarke, 2008; Deneulin and Bano, 2009). Nevertheless, the idea of the comeback of religion in international development upholds a narrow understanding of religion and fails to capture underlying dynamics of prevailing secular and religious frames (Jones and Peterson, 2011). Religion is still perceived as separate from mainstream development and it is assumed that religion can provide alternative perceptions on development. In the Netherlands specifically, the development project has historically been present through the work of Christian missions yet has increasingly become a closed 'business-like' system in which measurable goals, means and outcomes are central (Grotenhuis, 2008). Indeed, despite attempts to destabilize dominant secular discourse within the development projects and of secularization as historical process, theories of secularization continue to exist in the Dutch worldview and more importantly, have created inherently dualistic frames of the secular and the religious in development discourses.

Since, as Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) note, maintaining the religious identity in the face of powerful secularizing forces (such as governmental funding) is a challenge for religious non-governmental organizations (NGOs) it is this study's interest to explore how religious NGOs are indeed influenced by development frames of religion and the secular. This thesis aims to deviate from an inherent dualistic understanding of religion and the secular and therefore employs the work of Barnett and Stein, who offer a relational approach to religion and the secular. The authors essentially argue that the secularization thesis is false and that rather, processes of sanctification of the secular and secularization of religious can be observed (Barnett and Stein, 2012). Founded on this operational framework, this thesis focuses on Cordaid and ICCO, two development organizations in the Netherlands that are inspired on Catholic (Cordaid) and Protestant (ICCO) faith. The organizations are particularly interesting for this study since they both have long-standing traditions in the Netherlands – they have undergone the many phases of development and witnessed changing discourses of religion and secularity for development. Indeed, both Cordaid and ICCO have a Christian identity, work towards 'general' development goals and objectives, and have been part of the co-funding system since respectively 1965 and 1968.

Furthermore, while Cordaid is a religious NGO inspired on Catholic tradition and ICCO is a Protestant-based organization, the organizations have merged in 2021. While this merge is not the main focus of this thesis, it is interested in the dynamics between the respected faiths of the two organizations and will focus particularly on how Cordaid and ICCO have changed but still continue to give meaning to faith and the sacred to their organization.

1.1 Research Questions

Following the interest of this study as described above, different key questions that will be explored in this study are formulated. Firstly, the study will dive into processes of professionalization and rationalization as outlined by Barnett (2012) within Cordaid and ICCO, and therefore provide an answer the question of *what forces of professionalization and rationalization can be identified within Cordaid and ICCO?* Secondly, it will look into the changes and continuities of faith in Cordaid and ICCO and therefore, ask *how have Cordaid and ICCO changed and continued giving meaning to faith and the sacred in their organizations?* To provide an answer to the research questions, this study applies a case study design to Cordaid and ICCO to gain in-depth knowledge of religious NGOs.

1.2 Research Objectives

By answering the research questions as outlined above, this study aims to achieve a number of research objectives. First, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing, critical debate of secular developmental thinking. Although studies on the engagement of religion in development exist quite extensively, many questions remain unanswered. Indeed, this thesis is critical of the religion/secular binary, since religion contains the fundamental norms and values that define what it means to live well for the vast majority of the world population. It is a critical factor for development that can no longer be ignored and as many scholars and practitioners of development argue, should be indisputable in development. It is therefore the particular aim of this study to enhance knowledge on the manifestation of religion within religious NGOs, specified to the Dutch context. To do so, in this thesis the aim is to show how secularism has guided developmental thinking for decades, and how secularization theories have been increasingly questioned and challenged. Secondly, this thesis intends to show that the sharp distinction between the religious and the secular as often made is too simple and that rather, religious and secular frameworks are entanglement and cannot be viewed as a binary. Last, through the case study design this thesis adopts, it aims to deepen knowledge and insight on religious NGOs Cordaid and ICCO, and hopes to contribute to general knowledge on religious development organizations.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This study will begin to lay out a literature review, providing a historical overview of religion and development in the Netherlands. As emphasized by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2011), history is important for

the formation of diverse religious NGO identities. In an attempt to understand religious NGOs in current political contexts and how justifications and motivations for certain actions and services changed over time, engagement with history is essential. This chapter starts with a short historical view on Catholic and Protestant missions, outlining the colonial roots of development work. It will then go into the post-World War II period, when the explicit impact of modernization and secularization emerged. The chapter will then turn to the Dutch context and discuss processes of secularization and depillarization in the 1960s in the country, also shortly introducing the co-funding system of the Dutch government. Fourth, it will explore how the development project became a 'business-like', professionalized model and last, it will introduce more current societal discourses on religion and the secular in the Netherlands. The second chapter of this study will provide a theoretical framework that serves as a basis for analysis, laying out notions of identity and concepts of religion and the secular extensively. In this chapter, Barnett and Stein's operational framework to study discursive strands of religion and the secular in development policies and programs – that allows to look at the construction of complex meanings of the sacred in the life of contemporary NGOs – is explored. The third chapter lays out the methodological framework of this study, including the case study design, research methodologies and identified religious and secular development frames that serve as a guidance for analysis. The subsequent chapters consist of analyses of data and will discuss research findings. The first analytical chapter looks into professionalization and bureaucratization within Cordaid and ICCO and therefore specifically looks into the co-funding system, professionalization and bureaucratization within the organizations. The second analytical chapter explores more deeply the concept of sanctification as defined by Barnett and Stein (2012), therefore exploring how Cordaid and ICCO have changed and continued giving meaning to faith and the sacred in their organizations. The study will briefly touch upon the merge of Cordaid and ICCO and before providing a discussion of the finding and concluding remarks.

2. Literature Review: Religion and Development in the Netherlands

This chapter explores the historical relationship between religion and development and focuses specifically on the Dutch context. First, this chapter unpacks the continuous impact of historical Christian missionaries as occurred in colonial times. Secondly, the explicit impact of modernization and secularization theses on the development, that emerged after the end of the second World War, will be discussed. This chapter will then zoom in on processes of depillarization in the Netherlands and shortly discuss the impact of the introduction of the co-funding system. Fourth, it will explore the evolvement of the development project into a 'business-like' model, processes of professionalization and introduces societal discourses on religion and the secular in the Netherlands.

2.1 Catholic and Protestant Missions and the Colonial Roots of Development

The study of development cooperation often overlooks its historical relationship with missionary and colonial roots but rather relates current development work only to what has been done since the end of the second world war (Kothari, 2005, 47-8). Exemplary, Nekkers and Malcontent argue in *Fifty years of Dutch Development Cooperation* that the history of Dutch development cooperation starts in 1949, with US President Truman's announcement of a program to advance underdeveloped countries (Nekkers and Malcontent, 1999, 11). However, as Boersema (2001), Kothari (2005) and other 'post-development' scholars argue, the origins of development are found in the continuation of colonialism. In fact, colonialism has shaped much of today's world as for centuries, colonial powers implemented languages, education models, legal and health care systems in a top-down hierarchal model in colonized areas – that largely remained after gaining dependency in African countries (Potter et al., 2008). Religion and particularly Christianity played a large role in setting up and maintaining colonies and arguably, Catholic and Protestant missions (an organization that executes development activities on behalf of the Catholic or Protestant Church) that occurred since the fifteenth century influence the Dutch vision on development cooperation to this day. Exemplary, in 1896 the Dutch Protestant Church introduced the concept of *core- and ancillary services*, meaning that while evangelical preaching would be at the core of the service, ancillary services such as diaconate and direct aid occurred as well. As these principles naturally evolved over time and influenced future missions, during one of the missionary conferences that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, the idea of the *comprehensive approach* was introduced (Boersema, 2001, 87-89). This concept includes that Christian missions have to comprehend complete living circumstances of people. Instead of only focusing on physical and mental circumstances added emphasis was put on social-economic structures. These ideas grew into a four-dimensional missionary approach that comprised evangelical preaching, education, medical care, and socio-economic aid provision. In practice this meant that both Protestants and Catholics who were involved in many initiatives to spread their faith in other parts of the world, viewed faith and civilization as a pair increasingly (Boersema, 2001, 89). Their missions were accompanied with attempts to improve

education and living standards, since missionaries considered their practical involvement with living conditions part of the best way to bring people all over the world in contact with their religious message (Boersema, 2001). Certainly, missionaries and colonialism were strongly connected and after gaining independence between the 1940s and 1970s, many former colonies largely retained these systems and have strong connections to their former colonizers, notably through aid, trade and political relationships (Potter et al., 2008). As Deacon and Tomalin (2015, 72) contend, ''contemporary NGOs are involved in carrying on the work of their precursors, the missionaries and voluntary organizations that cooperated in Europe's colonization and control of Africa''. In other words, Christianity has been vital for colonial development in Africa in a variety of ways and even more, has largely impacted the creation modern development cooperation. The next section will consider evolvements of the development project in the post-war and post-colonial era.

2.2 International Cooperation: the Post WOII period

Societal and political developments that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century have been quite impactful on Dutch development cooperation (Boersema, 2001). After the end of the second world war, development cooperation essentially became an issue of secular agencies as development was considered a secular business that Western governments were the main funders off (Jones and Peterson, 2011). Immediately after the second world war, the Netherlands were mainly pre-occupied with the reconstruction of the country that had suffered extensively during the war and the struggle for independence in the Dutch East Indies. Nevertheless, by 1949, the Cabinet decided to make its first financial contribution to the UN technical assistance program and thereby marked the start of Dutch governmental development aid (Nekkers and Malcontent, 1999). The concept of development was introduced and quickly became central in thinking about North-South relationships. Indeed, major global changes such as decolonization and the rebuilding of Europe and Asia deeply impacted politics, while new approaches to public and private life and the role of democratic institutions emerged. The First, Second and Third World were created, the growth theory of Keynes (1936) and Rostow's *stages of economic growth* (1960) became the basis for studying economics, progress was described in material prosperity only, and secular worldviews grew dominant in Western European countries (ter Haar, 2011). Exemplary, in 1960 the first 'UN development decade' was announced by the United Nations, in which industrialized countries were recommended to spend 0,7 percent of their gross national product on development aid. Even though it took the Netherlands another fifteen years to get to this percentage, Western countries were optimistic about the possibilities to help Third World countries, mainly induced by modernization thinking of Rostow. Development aid was thought of as the way to bring economic growth (Beerends and Broere, 2004). Even though development theories started as a field in their own right in this period, development theories were highly influenced and defined by general post-war Western discourses. In essence, post-war visions of development were shaped by the conviction that

economic growth was essential for the achievement of higher living standards worldwide, and the belief that secularization was an inevitable part of the development process (Deneulin and Bano, 2009). For the Netherlands particularly, the second half of the twentieth century was closely tied with decolonization processes but was thus at the same time a reflection of Western optimism about the potential for bringing prosperity to the Third world countries, that was primarily focused on achieving economic development in these countries (Nekkers and Malcontent, 1999). Exemplary, in 1956 the Dutch Organization for International Aid (*Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand, NOVIB*) originated, as well as action groups and committees that were concerned with bringing economic prosperity (Nekkers and Malcontent, 1999).

At the same time, attention for religion was marginalized, secularization theory became prevalent and religious power was replaced with secular policies and practices (Ager and Ager, 2011). The essence of secularization theory was founded by fathers of sociology Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, at the end of the nineteenth century. In the newly established social sciences, religion was viewed as incompatible with the rationality of human reason. Both Durkheim and Weber established the core of secularization theory as the inverse relationship of modernity and religion. The theory brings out the idea that as a society becomes more modern, religion will lose its significance in both society and people's consciousness. Societies will become 'secular', and religious explanations for the world will be replaced by rationality (van Dam, 2012). Due to the immense impact of secularization as part of modernization theory in the second half of the twentieth century, religion lost its significance and became marginalized in the development discourse. Consequently, for many years scholars have worked based on the assumption that religious beliefs and faith would wither and those religious institutions would lose their power. To illustrate, influential author Arthur Lewis published a *Theory of Economic Growth*, in which he offered a framework for studying economic development. In this framework, religion was frequently mentioned as an important factor that hinders economic growth (Deneulin and Bano, 2009). The analysis implied that religious sources of truth would be replaced by utilitarian rationale for individual choices and actions; religion would no longer be used as legitimization; and would be replaced by scientific explanations for human life, nature and society. The work of Lewis was not only influential for the perception of the role of religion but impacted the concept of development as growth and progress depend on material goods, work and wealth creation. Differences between countries were measured in terms of economic growth, and as described above, there was a strong belief that prosperity could only be described in material terms (Rakodi, 2015). Importantly, in the Netherlands the interest in development aid was furthermore induced with the decline of pillarization in the Netherlands, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Processes of Secularization and Depillarization in the 1960s

The Netherlands, a country that could be characterized as religiously pillarized with Christian traditions until the 1950s, saw declining influence of institutionalized religion in society occurring together with processes of depillarization and expansion of the welfare state. Starting in the 1960s, the Dutch pillar system was gradually replaced by liberal lifestyles, focusing on rights of autonomy and self-determination for the individual during the 1970s and 1980s. As a consequence of these processes, support for confessional political parties declined, church membership and participation and the Christian character of the Netherlands was increasingly questioned. Indeed, while the Netherlands were still the country in Europe with the most churchgoers at the beginning of the 20th century, a couple of decades later the Netherlands was known as the least churched country (Schuh et al., 2012, 365). Furthermore, social laws ended the need for churches to step in on the terrain of health care. The state approached citizens as people with individual rights first and religious communities came second (van Dam, 2012). Civilians thus became less depended on religious organizations, caused by the welfare state that guaranteed social security and high-quality education. Internally, religious communities changed as well, both in more liberal and orthodox directions. Religious citizens were disappointed in general by crisis in institutions such as churches who had failed to renew and consequently, emphasis was put on deepening of faith on the personal level and the responsibility of individual believers. The concept of secularization gave way for a new developmental course, towards a strong orientation on worldly matters. Certainly, the notion of secularism gave people in the 1960s and 70s the perception that their individual decision to leave church was part of an inevitable historical process. Opponents of religious power argued for secularization as a process part of the modernization of society. These processes are visible in numbers, between 1960 and 1980 the number of people not member of a church raised from 18 to 26 percent (van Dam, 2018, 119).

The ongoing transitions in the Netherlands influenced thought on missionaries as well. Decolonisation forced Dutch churches to re-assess their potential role in the Third World and so, the aim to civilize colonial people changed into the aim to help southerners. Catholics and Protestants created organizations that – in cooperation with the Dutch government – formed into development corporations that mainly focused on improving practical living conditions. Particularly the exclusive co-funding that was initiated in 1965 and that required for NGOs to meet certain criteria in order to receive funding, was quite impactful. The system required that NGOs had to finance at least 25 percent of their expenditures through non-governmental sources such as donations, membership fees and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank. Notably, the co-financing system initially followed the structure of the pillarized Dutch society (a more detailed discussion on the co-funding system follows below in this section). Nevertheless, after the introduction of the Dutch governmental co-financing system, Christian development organizations professionalized intensely in the 1970s in fields such as health care and education (Boomsma, 2013). Employees of religious organizations were now professionals in a specific field, still working on the basis of their 'religious hearts' yet focused on their professional task.

Furthermore, these organizations closely tied themselves to the state who in turn expected high quality work from their civil society partners (Nekkers and Malcontent, 1999). As a consequence, confessional civil organizations became more independent from their churches and religious communities and more closely tied to the government. Exemplary, The Protestant Netherlands Missionary Council separated development work from missionary work by establishing ICCO as independent Protestant development organization and the Catholic Central Mission Commissariat established Cebemo (that was later renamed Cordaid) as independent Catholic development organization (Bartelink, 2016). In the period from 1965 to 1968, 195 project proposals were approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of which 60 to 70 percent came from Catholic organizations. As Bartelink (2016) notes, the co-funding system was to some extent based on the pillarization system, since funding was allocated as follows: Cordaid 40%, ICCO 40% and religiously neutral organization Oxfam Novib, who received 20% (Boomsma, 2013). At the same time, religious sending and missions did not disappear since churches financially supported Christians around the world in order for them to spread the Christian message. For example, in 1972 Catholic and Protestant churches together organized project *Kom over de brug* and raised 55 million guilders for these attempts. Initiatives concerning spreading the Christian message remained popular within churchgoers, yet lost terrain on those organizations that rather aimed to improve livelihoods (and thus set this as a priority over Christian faith). Indeed, while processes of depillarization were ongoing and the number of churchgoers declined, religion did not disappear but manifested in different forms and places and became strongly influenced by secular discourses (van Dam, 2018). The next paragraph will discuss social and cultural developments that contributed to changes in the Dutch society and impacted thinking about religion and development from the 1980s.

2.4 Religious interest in the Development Business

During the 1970s it became clear that the vast majority of people in development countries remained poor. Indeed, a new ideological and political approach was introduced and under new Minister Pronk for Development Cooperation in 1973, new policy lines were presented. The new policies evolved around the concept of 'self-reliance', the idea that economic independency should go hand in hand with poverty reduction. Furthermore, due to the oil crisis of the 1980s, political and economic circumstances in many Western countries worsened and willingness for development aid decreased. Debates concerning the delivery and quality of development aid evolved the field and led to development becoming more of a 'business', with strong emphasis on measurable results, goal-oriented and effective use of scarce resources, transparent processes and professional fund-lobbying. In the business-like field of development, space for religion was limited to 'fitting the scheme', thus only if religion contributes to opted, measurable results (Nekkers and Malcontent, 1999). Indeed, Buijs (2001) notes that fifty years after the end of the second world war, development cooperation had lost its innocence, and the world of development had been forced to re-invent itself. The Netherlands saw new development organizations

emerge and an increasing focus on human rights, democratization and gender in the development discourse. Religious development organizations – while still being religiously inspired – gradually grew into the secular development discourse (Bartelink, 2016). Yet, shortly before the turn of the century an increasing number of influential scholars such as Scott Thomas, started criticizing the core of secularization theory, arguing that the idea of diminishing religion is too simple and inadequate (Thomas, 2005). Research on the relationship between religion and development had been growing since the turn of the century, and as practitioners of development increasingly recognized that existing approaches to development had been ineffective, the comeback of religion could be witnessed (Jones and Petersen, 2011). Indeed, while there was little space for religion in the second half of the twentieth century, the beginning of the 21st century saw a 'renewed' interest in religion. Exemplary, Marshall (2001) focused on powerful links between religion and modernization and posed questions on how links might operate, and actors should respond early on in the twenty-first century. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), while receiving doubts and criticism, introduced new ways of thinking about religion in development and opened dialogue. Renewed interest in religion could also be witnessed in the Netherlands. This reflected well in Minister for Development Cooperation, van Ardenne, the Minister (2003) who launched the *Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy* and stated the ''we (…) should put religion back on the policy map'' (Bartelink, 2009, 170). Furthermore, in 2004 the *Knowledge Centre on Religion and Development* was founded. Several Dutch religious NGOs (among which Cordaid and ICCO) and two academic institutions initiated the center to emphasize the importance of religion for sustainable development (Bartelink, 2009). However, despite numerous efforts of scholars and development practitioners to include religion in development in a sustainable manner, discourses remained build upon constructions of secularization and modernization theories. As illustrated by the idea of the 'resurgence of religion', while religion has always been part of the construction of modernity and social change, the development field perceived secular as 'neutral' and religion as an instrument. In other words, religion remained viewed as something that should be tangible and visible through the presence of religious NGOs. Exemplary, Renkema (2009) argued to, in the first place, use religion as an instrument for initiating cooperation between religious organizations and secondly, to use religion as a vehicle for defending certain values and stimulate theological interpretations within religious trends. Renkema (2009) called this a 'dynamic within religious tradition towards human rights. Interestingly, while Renkema argued to implement using religion as an instrument, the author was cautious of stimulating theological interpretations because it may lead to development organizations taking a stance within religious discussions (Renkema, 2009). On the contrast, Berenschot and Tieleman (2009) point to the limitations of using religious organizations for 'secular' development goals such as social justice and gender equality, while arguing that religious organizations should be more explicit in their stance on religious traditions. In their core, while both authors strived for a 'de-secularization' of development cooperation, a debate on the usage of religion as 'instrument' was prevalent. These debates exemplify how religious NGOs have become a separate

category within international development and the dichotomy between religion and the secular has deepened (Fountain, 2013). Moreover, in the 'secular religion of Western modernity', religion has often been perceived as counter-development, and reason and faith were usually mutually exclusive spheres. Even though this relationship has improved, the connections between religion and development have been ''fragile and intermittent at best, critical and confrontational at worst'' (Marshall and Keough 2004, 1). In current practice, western donor countries support the work of a small range of religious NGOs that are mainly Christian and seen as ''quasi-secular'' (Clarke, 2008). This means that Christian-based religious NGOs tend to practice their faith 'lightly', while they work within the idea of development as economic growth. As has been discussed, the Netherlands initiated the theme of religion in development quite early since the turn of the century, while societal changes concerning the role of religion occurred at the same time. The next section will explore relatively recent dominant changes in the societal and political discourse of religion in the Netherlands and its impact on Dutch Christian NGOs.

2.5 The relationship of Religion and the Secular in Dutch society

Linked to the broad social changes that occurred in the 1960s in the Netherlands, a secular discomfort with religion that occurred over the twentieth century and in particular since the 1960s, still entails temporal discourses. This discomfort is widespread across the Dutch population – also fed by the dominant self-understanding of the Dutch being liberal, progressive and secular people (Beekers, 2015). As Beekers (2015) notes, religion is often depicted, particularly by Dutch political and cultural elites, as backward and potentially dangerous. Indeed, this is a result of the 'cultural revolution' of the 1960s where individual autonomy but also sexual freedom and the right to personal happiness were embraced. Furthermore, religion is often framed as 'lagging behind'. Taking religious scriptures as literal truth, upholding conservative moral views and engaging in religious communities are often framed as out of sync with today's progressive and libertarian culture. Simply put, religious groups are denied as being a part of the contemporary society and have thus become part of a rhetorical move of 'othering' (Beekers, 2015). Consequently, as Mahmood (2009, 73) suggests, religion is expected to be a private concern of 'free choice'. It does not solely involve the separation of church and state, but ''the rearticulation of religion in a manner that is commensurate with modern sensibilities and modes of governance'' (Mahmood, 2009, 65). Importantly, with the rise of public Islam in the Netherlands in the 1990s, a shift in discomfort with religion occurred. Early in the twenty first century, a negative view on the role of religion – and in particular, Islam – in development and modernization was communicated by a number of Dutch politicians. Exemplary, public attention to Islam heavily increased in 2000, with the publication of ''The Multicultural Drama'' by Paul Scheffer. Even more, in 2010 Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (PVV) became the third largest parliamentary fraction. Politicians such as Wilders underpinned their hatred arguments about Islam with progressivist narratives in which the 'dominant culture' became associated with Judeo-Christian heritage (Schuh et al., 2012, 355). Indeed, discomfort

with religion has become less focused at Christians and more towards Muslims in the Netherlands and importantly, the social role of Christianity has been affected by debates around Islam (Schuh et al., 2012). Beekers (2015) illustrates this shift by the construction of Muslims as 'allochthons and Christians as 'autochthonous. For this study it is important to grasp how this construction shows how Dutch Christians are quite self-evidently regarded as 'autochthonous' in dominant discourses. In the regard of liberal, progressive and secular values as part of the Dutch identity and citizenship, a 'new nationalism' emerged that is based on a simplified orientalism in which secular freedom and religious doctrine stand in direct opposition to each other. Yet this discourse did not stand in opposition to religion in general but in debates focused on the multicultural society. Over the years, this nationalist political agenda became indicative for a wide nostalgic turn, particularly in relation to concerns with Dutch culture and identity. In the context of such 'nationalistic nostalgia', Christian traditions appeared increasingly as a defining feature of Dutch identity. Christianity is thus hauled up stage, not as a system of religious practice and moral reasoning but as a national identity and cultural heritage. Indeed, as Beekers (2015, 46) argues, ''within this nostalgic frame Christianity is appropriated as a national cultural heritage, while the lived experiences of Christians today – as well as the potentially radical politics of the religion – are disregarded''. Furthermore, Beekers (2015) notes a remarkable shift in the representations of religion as well. In the context of an emerging autochthonous nostalgia, Christians may stand for something that ''we are essentially about'' (Beekers, 2015, 46). Beekers (2015, 46-47) thus shows light upon a paradox, ''while Christians are perceived as outsiders to the secular culture of individual liberty and autonomy, they are at the same time seen to represent a religious culture that is essential to Dutch identity''. In the same vein, Kennedy and Zwemer (2010) point to the Netherlands as a country of paradoxes in terms of religion and secularism. Indeed, while the Netherlands has the highest number of citizens disclaiming religious affiliation and knows a strong state and church separation, public life has been characterized by powerful religious movements. In line with the argument of Beekers, Kennedy and Zwemer (2010) note how the historically Protestant country with a Catholic minority has struggled coming to terms with Islam as 'new' religion that arrived with immigration and this has resulted in a society frequently given in religious tension. Precisely for this reason, the Netherlands in its recent history has been subject to a debate on the place for religion in public and private life and as Kennedy and Zwemer (2010, 240) argue,

> one could argue that the 'relevance' of Dutch history in the last two centuries is that it makes visible the dynamic role that religion has played in modernity, in particular the range of responses open to various actors – states, associations and individuals – in the face both of growing religious pluralism and in the rise of society where belief itself was no longer a given.

It is essential for the analytical part of this study to grasp this societal context and both the embracement and problematization of religion, to explore how discourses have impacted debates and initiatives on religion and development by Christian development organizations. The first analytical chapter of this study will cover these topics.

3. Theoretical Framework

Scholars, governmental actors, and practitioners' approach and define religion and the secular in many different ways. For this study, it is essential to identify underlying issues of the two main concepts of this thesis and disentangle the concepts from these issues.

3.1 The Secular

In order to grasp how religion is shaped in the context of today, it is important to unpack different perceptions of 'the secular', 'secularization' and 'secularism'. Casanova (2011) describes how the secular is academically used as an antonym for the religious and how both the secular and the religious are shaped by the experiences of reality. The author considers secularization as a social-scientific explanation for a phenomenon in which the religious and the secular are appropriated as different categories. The strong separation between religious and secular institutions, for example between church and state, exemplify these categories. The secularization thesis follows from this dualistic idea, posing those concepts will increasingly apply to secular spaces while religion will diminish into private spheres and eventually altogether. Although criticism on the foundations (the diminishing and privatization of religion) of secularization thesis have been ongoing for many years, dualism between the secular and religious has become prevalent in society and political policy. Indeed, as Hurd (2008, 16) emphasizes, secularism in the West has produced authoritative settlements of religion and politics while at the same time claiming to be exempt from this process. Following Hurd (2008, 12-3) and Taylor (2007, 2), Wilson (2012, 13) understands secularism as ''the public settlement of the relationship between religion and politics''. Secularism as a public settlement is seen as a societal characteristic of the West and refers to the possibilities of choosing if and what religion to believe in. This has facilitated the distinction between the immanent (the secular) and transcendent (religion), and the removal of the transcendent from Western public society. Thus, while Wilson (2012) contends that what is religious and what is secular depends on socio-historical, political, cultural, economic, theological, and environmental circumstances – mainstream secularism may attempt to exercise power and control over how religions manifests in politics and public life. Indeed, secularism has produced a quite limited yet dominant definition of religion as institutional, individual, and irrational, and is highly connected to Western political philosophy of liberalism. Furthermore, Wilson (2012, 15) refers to secularization as ''the observable historical process of managing the relationship between religion and politics in the Western social and political context and to distinguish this process from the ideological projects of secularism''. The process of secularization is primarily induced by the principles of secularism and may thus involve the restriction or removal of religious influence in political, legal, social, and other public institutions. Following Wilson's (2012) understanding of secularism and the process of secularization, secularization in the Netherlands is understood as a process that involves the overt disassociation of particular public values with the Judeo-Christian tradition while holding on the general spirit of those values. In other

words, the transcendent is removed while the imprint of the transcendent on the immanent remains. Dualism of the immanent and the transcendent is thus an important component of secularism and the process of secularization, exemplary promoting the separation between public and private spheres and excluding religious ideas from the public realm and is thereby quite influential on understandings of religion.

3.2 The Religious

Among scholars there is a widespread dispute over how religion should be defined. Many different definitions of religion can be found in the social sciences, ranging from 'a private set of beliefs', to 'a subset of culture, or 'a belief in a higher power' (Deneulin and Bano, 2009, 52). Influential cultural and social anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973, 90) defined religion as follows:

> A system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

This definition has been widespread adopted in the social sciences, yet anthropologist Talal Asad is one of many scholars that has articulated strong criticism to the project of defining religion, focusing mainly on the search for universality and its historical processes (Asad, 2003; Hurd, 2008; Casanova, 1994). The author argues that the concept of religion not only finds its foundations in seventeenth century Europe and Christian theology, but it is also still inevitable intermingled with these historical processes. Consequently, the Western understanding of religion is limited to dominant religion in modern Western society (Asad, 2003). Religion is often perceived as a merely personal asset that influences a person's perception of the world but is detached from the external world. Moreover, for as long as the concept is primarily based in the context of secularization processes, the concepts of religion and secularism stand in direct opposition to each other and have a conceptual divide that leads to practices where the terms operate as normative categories (Hurd, 2008, 12). To overcome this ambiguous divide, Deneulin and Bano (2009), refer to religion as a 'tradition of thought' (Deneulin and Bano, 2009, 63), that is based on fundamental agreements of core lessons and readings. More importantly, the authors approach religion as a constant strives for the best social practices and argue it is constantly evolving and changing by understandings of what it means to live well. In this thesis, religion is not treated as an antonym for secularism, nor as a distinct category, but is characterized through all aspects of life. Following Wilson (2012, 20), religion in this thesis is thus defined as

> an internally logical set of ideas and beliefs about the nature of existential reality (encompassing the immanent as well as the transcendent) that shapes and is shaped by both individual and community identity and action, and which *may* be facilitated and practiced through institutional arrangements, rituals and/or symbols.

This definition moves away from the inherent dualism between religion and secularism and importantly, Wilson (2012) specifically acknowledges the significant role of institutions and NGOs in global dominant religions such as Christianity and in the study of political contexts such as development.

3.3 The Relationship between Religion and the Secular

Although this thesis aims to deviate from an inherent dualistic conceptualization of religion and the secular, it is essential to understand how our current perceptions of religion and the secular entirely emerge from each other. As von Stuckrad (2013) argues, when rethinking the dynamics of secularization, it has to be noted how the formations of the secular are intimately linked with formations of the religious, in processes of religious change. To illustrate, ideas of religion and secularism have been shaped closely to Western European modernity and specifically, Schuh separates the concept of the secular from linear narratives of modernity but rather points to historical, national trajectories and changing expressions of secularity (Schuh, 2012). Furthermore, Barnett and Stein offer a relational approach to religion and the secular that is leading for this study.

3.4 A Relational Approach to Religion and the Secular

To explore how NGOs are religious as well as secular and how these categories are mutually constructed and at play in organizational discourses and practices, Barnett and Stein's study on this theme will be leading. In their work *Sacred Aid*, the authors critique the dualistic framing of religion and the secular of development while offering an operational framework to study discursive strands of religion and secularism in development policies and programs. The framework allows to look at the construction of layered and complex meanings of the sacred in the life of contemporary NGOs.

In essence, the authors argue that the secularization thesis is false and that rather, processes of sanctification of the secular and secularization of religious life that can be witnessed, two processes that create new forms and meaning of the sacred in daily life and that are therefore subject to change. These new forms are empirically in the context of humanitarianism. Secularization of humanitarianism understood as ''the process by which elements of the everyday and the profane insinuate themselves and become integrated into humanitarianism, thus challenging its sacred standing'' (Barnett and Stein, 2012, 8). On the contrast, sanctification is defined as ''mean creation of the sacred, establishment and protection of a space that is viewed as pure and separate from the profane'' (Barnett and Stein, 2012, 8). Furthermore, the authors adopt a definition of religion that does not pivot around the existence of God but that heavily relies on the sacred, leading to the understanding seemingly secular organizations may have a religious dimension while religious organizations have secular dimensions as well. Thus, as the authors put it ''we should not reduce the sacred to religion; instead, we should recognize the extent to which the sacred can exist within secularism itself'' (Barnett and Stein, 2012, 18). The sacred pinpoints to the blurriness between the religious and the secular – because both have a sense of the sacred. Indeed,

sanctification does not necessarily lead to religious inspiration but rather to processes that draw on values and ethics while not being political and in humanitarian space and fields of human rights the sacred for the secular and religious are both represented and sanctified. Exemplary, while secularization can be witnessed through the growing role of states and commercial enterprises, centrality of fundraising, intrusion of governance, processes of bureaucratization and other earthly matters such as professionalization, and requirements of evidence to demonstrate effectiveness, sanctification exists in spaces free of politics and ''in the calling of a humanitarian ethic that acts first and asks questions later, insists that motives must be innocent and altruistic, and guards against a world in which interests and instruments trump values and ethics'' (Barnett and Stein, 2012, 8).

To understand the presence of the sacred in development organizations, the concepts 'humanitarian space' and 'human rights' are the two most important concepts to grasp, as in the narratives and lived experiences of humanitarian organizations they represent the central values of humanitarians. The core principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and universality have been adopted by humanitarian and development organizations as a code of conduct and symbolize the sacred and values of the actions and core of organizations. According to the authors, while these principles serve instrumental purposes the principles have acquired sacred meanings in the everyday context of humanitarian and development work. Indeed, by invoking the sacred development organizations acquire authority and legitimacy, in a world that systematically strips away authority. By examining how organizations defend their humanitarian space or human rights, it is possible to understand how organizations consider their own principles as sacred. To illustrate, Paras and Stein (2012) show how both religious and secular organizations may locate their authority in the sacred, by giving a deeper sense of purpose to their actions, promote global solidarities and impute a deep moral worth into their actions. At the same time, organizations must also negotiate with the political and profane to legitimize authority. Thus, instead of assuming a distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' organizations, this study explores the dynamics between the 'sacred' and the 'profane', while hypothesizing that religious organizations may be more successful bridging this tension than their secular counterparts.

Last, it is essential to understand how much development work has professionalized (see the literature review for a detailed discussion on this topic) since these professionalizing processes went hand in hand with a shift in thinking about the practical philosophy of humanitarianism. Development organizations have shifted towards rationalization and pragmatism that dominantly contain elements of the profane. Barnett (2012) explores the relationship of the sacred and profane in the contexts of the developments argues that not necessarily secularization, but a process of rationalization has taken place, such as calculating results and evolving guides to standardized responses (Barnett, 2012). These shifts have led to an increase in the demand for organizations to show their effectiveness, and therefore organizations increasingly think about methods of engagements to improve their interventions and evaluations. Importantly, the matters relating to the tools of intervention and evaluation also implicate the techniques and relationships to the objects of organization's compassion. More specifically, Barnett (2012)

identifies three developments that pushed organizations in the same direction. First, many aid agencies have grown into large, multidimensional or even multinational organizations. Importantly, growing organizations means accommodating more diverse views while sharp edges have often been taken off mission and identities. Secondly, many organizations have seen the benefits of bureaucratization, presenting objectivity, neutrality and impartiality for gaining acceptance by locals. Last, organizations often compete for the same funds from the same donors. They work in similar environments and their techniques are comparable. This has automatically led to adopting many of the same characteristics and symbols of legitimacy. Both secular and religious organizations have embraced the rationalization process and therefore grown into agencies with growing similar characteristics (Barnett, 2012).

3.5 Key questions

Following the literature review and theoretical framework as outlined above, different key questions that will be explored in this study, can be identified. Firstly, this thesis will explore processes of professionalization and rationalization as outlined by Barnett (2012), asking *what forces of professionalization and rationalization can be identified within Cordaid and ICCO?* Specifically, this chapter will look into professionalization and bureaucratization within the organizations, presentations of objectivity, neutrality and impartiality and their funding. The second analytical chapter will look into the changes and continuities of faith in the organizations questioning *how have Cordaid and ICCO changed and continued giving meaning to faith and the sacred in their organizations?* This chapter will explore more deeply the concept of sanctification as defined by Barnett and Stein (2012). Last, this study will briefly touch upon the merge of Cordaid and ICCO into one organization and explore the reasons for this development.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design: Case Study

This thesis adopts a case study design since this design allows for an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon that exists in a real-world context. The essence of the case study design is to assert why a specific development or set of developments has taken place and with what result – and thereby goes to the heart of this thesis. For a study that asks *why* and *how* questions, and that seeks to uncover contextual conditions that are relevant for the phenomenon under study adopting a case study design thus strengthens the research (Yin, 2003).

4.2 Research Methodology: Documentary Analysis and Interviews

The main research methods for this thesis are documentary analysis and interviews, two methods that can easily be combined and that will complement each other in this thesis. Simply put, documentary analysis involved the analysis of a range of documents that can be official material from organizations, governmental publications, letters, and reports, and so on. Documentary analysis focusses on the content of the documents and in this study specifically, are approached through interpretative means. Indeed, instead of a traditional quantitative analysis of documents, in this study the documents are analyzed by the interpretative approach that includes a focus on the language and concepts used, and the context in which the documents emerged (Given, 2008). Documents are a medium for transferring knowledge and an important source for the exploration of approaches and relationships, and therefore key in this thesis. Secondly, in order to address the main research question of this study, interviews are well-suited method. Interviews in qualitative research can take roughly three forms: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews as used in this study can be seen as a middle-form between structured and unstructured, as the researcher prepares a broad set of questions while still allowing flexibility during and in between the interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for an in-depth examination of real-life phenomena due to the combination of prepared questions that guide and ensure a certain focus in the interview, and flexibility that allow to explore perceptions of participants (Given, 2008). Often, semi-structured interviews are turned into transcripts that become the main data for analysis. In this study, however, interviews serve as a means to deepen knowledge of the researched phenomena, that has already been gained through documentary analysis. Rather than serving as the core data, the interviews thus serve as a complementing means and are therefore not completely written down. In this study, interviews are therefore summarized, and key findings highlighted.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

As discussed above, this thesis employs a documentary analysis complemented with semi-structured interviews and the data from these methods will be analyzed by looking specifically at religious and

secular frames that have been identified through various indicators. The indicators for analysis are primarily based on Ager and Ager's account of secular and religious development frames since, as in their own words (Ager and Ager, 2011, 457), ''the framing of religion and secular humanitarianism [is] required for effective discussion and dialogue on these issues''. Indeed, the authors argue how principles and policies of humanitarianism have increasingly been articulated in secular terms that are often perceived as neutral, while in practice secular development framing marginalizes religious practices and experience of humanitarian action. Secular frames are thus separated from religious development frames and while Ager and Ager argue that this separation brings many risks and problems, to assess how these frames influence religious NGOs, their differences have to be identified (Ager and Ager, 2011).

First of all, dominant secular frames primarily exhibit materialist features and the value of religion is therefore limited to terms such as *social capital, community cohesion,* and *social structure* (Ager and Ager, 2011, 460), while enlightenment values of *freedom, reason, self-determination* and *liberal* principles are associated with secular frames (466). Secondly, Ager and Ager (2011) show the continuous parallel between today's humanitarian discourse and colonialism, arguing how the marginalization of religion in the development discourse follows a similar pattern as late nineteenth century marginalization of African autochthonous identity. Indeed, while in the nineteenth century the focus of Western nations was on 'civilization' and 'salvation' and today's vocabulary focusses on 'underdevelopment' to 'development', both indicate a linear narrative of human progress. The vocabulary used thus changes, but the presumptions remain intact and religion – if considered at all – is seen as a barrier to progress or a sign of under-development. As a consequence, concepts such as *capacity strengthening, capacity building,* and *training* are identified in secular frames (Ager and Ager, 2011, 463). On the other hand, notions of *obedience, sacrifice* and *communitarianism* are more often associated in religious frames (Ager and Ager, 2011). Barnett and Stein (2012, 16) furthermore identify specific Christian characteristics, including ''an appeal to *supernatural entities*, *conversion experiences*, *doctrines*, *rituals*, understandings of the *meaning of suffering*, distinctions between the *sacred and profane*''[1], bearing in mind that although not all these aspects need to be present to be defined as religion, religious frames are influenced by these notions. Last, following Wilson's (2012, 20) understanding of religion as well, religious frames may involve ideas of *the nature of existential reality, rituals* and *symbols*, as well. In this study, the above-mentioned words are identified to either belong to the secular or religious development frame and will be used as a guideline for analysis. The frames serve as a means to point to specific differences or manifestations of religious or secular development frames, but it is essential to mention that the analysis is not limited to these words. As discussed above, an interpretative approach is employed that not only focuses on words and language but at context as well. In this way the identified secular and religious development frames are used as a guideline but leave space for context-related interpretation.

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[1] Emphasis added by author.

4.4 Limitations in Reliability and Validity

Although the research design and methodologies as used in this study have been carefully chosen, the methods employed impact the reliability and validity of this study. As Yin (2003) argues, opportunities to replicate the study should be in place to minimize changes of errors and biases in this study. However, in a case study design opportunities for replication almost never occur. Therefore, this study uses the 'case study protocol' as Yin (2003) suggests, making public documents and procedures of this study explicit. To increase both internal and external validity, two religious NGOs are included in the case study design. Indeed, analyses of both Cordaid and ICCO are included and will thereby allow defining cause-and-effect as well as how well the outcomes can be expected to apply to other settings (Yin, 2003). Most of the value of this study is however found in the provision of in-depth knowledge on the relationship of religion and secularity in religious development organizations and aims to contribute to general knowledge on this topic.

5. Introducing Cordaid and ICCO

5.1 Cordaid

Cordaid is a Dutch Catholic NGO and is one of the largest of Dutch NGOs. Cordaid stands for Catholic Organization for Relief and Development aid (Grotenhuis, 2014). Cordaid was founded in 1999, as a merger of three Catholic NGOs, namely Memise, Mensen in Nood and in particular Cebemo. Cordaid represents the international umbrella organization Caritas in the Netherlands. Caritas is closely affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy See. In practice, Cordaid focuses on participation in lobby networks of religious leaders and organizations. Since the establishment of the co-funding system in 1965, Cordaid has been one of the organizations selected by the Dutch government for public funding (see further in this chapter for a discussion of governmental funding) (Cordaid 2012, 4).

Taking into accounts its precedents, Cordaid has been active in fighting poverty, exclusion and injustice in countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America for over 100 years. While the values of the organization stem from Catholicism, Cordaid focuses in their value on the life of every individual and human dignity and the organization is committed to fighting for those in poverty and righteous less worldwide and for social and economic justice (Grotenhuis, 2014).

Cordaid adopts a community-based approach in its development work, meaning that in its programs the organization works together closely with beneficiaries, who are also involved in the making of programs. For this aim, over 200 Dutch employers work together with 617 partner organizations on a variety of programs and projects in 38 countries around the world. These local partners mainly consist of Catholic and ecumenical organizations. Cordaid aims to build a strong civil society and therefore focuses on five main themes: health, income generation, conflict transformation, disaster risk reduction and emergency aid (Lenfant and Rutten, 2013). Within these five themes, Cordaid heavily focuses on women, childbirth and sexual and reproductive healthcare (Grotenhuis, 2014).

5.2 ICCO

ICCO, the Inter-church Organization for Development Cooperation, was founded in 1964. ICCO is an interchurched organization for development cooperation that was founded by protestant churches in the Netherlands in order to access the Dutch co-funding system. ICCO was indeed essentially a product of the Dutch co-funding system as started in 1968. In this system, funding was divided through three channels, the Protestant, Catholic missionary councils and non-denominational third-party Novib. In 2006, ICCO managed a budget of 160 million euros and about 222 full-time positions. It was one of the members of the select and prestigious group of organizations with access to the billionaire budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (also the main funder).

Since its foundation, the organization aims to build a world without poverty and injustice. The core values of ICCO are the right to exist and security of existence. ICCO finances activities in development countries that stimulate people and enable them to work in their own way on human worthy living

conditions. ICCO works on structural poverty reduction on the basis on Protestant-Christian values. The organization cooperates with church and non-church organizations that are closely related to target groups. Furthermore, ICCO is a partner in different national and international ecumenical networks that share the organizations' values. In its work, ICCO respects cultures, history and societal roles of related organizations and finds value in actively listening and working in dialogue (ICCO, 2016).

6. Analysis 1: Professionalization and Rationalization

This first analytical chapter will explore processes of professionalization and rationalization as outlined by Barnett (2012), asking *what forces of professionalization and rationalization can be identified within Cordaid and ICCO?* Specifically, this chapter will go into changes in governmental funding, determine how Cordaid and ICCO have adapted and will end by diving into how the organizations demonstrate their capabilities.

6.1 Historical Evolution of the Co-funding System and the Financial Impact on NGOs

The first part of this chapter will discuss funding of Cordaid and ICCO and will therefore go into the Dutch co-financing system for non-governmental development organizations. As the largest public resource of funding for private development aid organizations, this system is quite essential for the existence of these organizations. As shortly discussed in the literature review of this study, the governmental funding of the Netherlands has been impactful but also changing immensely over the last decades. To grasp the impact of the system of Cordaid and ICCO, these changes will therefore be discussed firstly and will then be followed by a closer look into Cordaid and ICCO.

The Dutch co-financing system has gone through a number of impactful changes, that provide an interesting insight into evolving perspectives on public funding through private development organizations. As Ruben and Schulpen (2009, 293) argue, three stages can be distinguished. First, the initial stage between 1965 and 2002, when selective numbers of large NGOs were recognized as co-funding agencies, together with some more specialized organizations that received individual project funding. As mentioned in the literature review, the co-financing program was originally only meant for three organizations, Cebemo, ICCO and Novib. During the expansion stage between 2002 and 2006, two broad co-funding systems evolved: core funding support and specialized thematic support for (inter)national organizations. Since 2006, in the consolidation stage, large programs with grants for NGOs based in the Netherlands exists together with a strategic alliance for non-Dutch partners.

To grasp the impact of these changes on the organizations involved, it is key to understand the core criteria for selection that changed within the system overall. During the initial stage, institutional aspects that were primarily related to the quality of local partner networks and the overall effectiveness of aid provision were considered important. In particular, organizations had to mobilize their traditional counterparts in development countries as effective agents for channeling aid. The main thrust for public funding was thus organizations' abilities to access to local agencies with broad support to cost-effectively endorse change. Later criteria moved to planning procedures and consistency (the consolidation stage), and then to visibility and policy relevance (during the specialization stage). Starting in 2002 the structure of the Dutch co-funding program transformed into a broad, less structured, co-financing system (Ruben and Schulpen, 2009). Indeed, following international neoliberal tendencies of the early 2000s, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs changed the rules for applying for funds, thereby

ultimately broadening the spectrum of organizations that were possibly eligible while stimulating more competition between organizations. While traditionally the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation (MDC) took charge on individual assessments of project-funding proposals for Dutch NGOs, due to a much increasing number of new projects the Ministry shifted towards a more global appraisal of regionally oriented and multiperiod aid programs. Now, 4-year block grants were awarded to recognized organizations – that were regularly evaluated and inspected. The assessment was based on partner network qualities, aid delivery efficiency and the administration of funding operations (Schulpen, 2016). Put shortly, to receive funding from the Dutch government NGOs are now required to show their ''effectiveness of interventions and aid chain management'' and ''visible results and demonstrated impact'' (Ruben and Schulpen, 2009, 296).

At the same time, the absolute amount of funding NGOs receive has heavily decreased. Indeed, while the income of Cordaid in 2010 amounted to €180 million (of which €104 million, 57.5% from governments and almost all Dutch government), funding heavily decreased in 2011 leading to a dip in income of Cordaid. In 2011, the total income of Cordaid amounted to €111 million. By 2012, Cordaid was able to raise its income to almost €130 million and in 2013, Cordaid reached the same level of income as it had in 2010. Cordaid was able to do so mostly due to non-Dutch governments' subsidies (Schulpen 2016, 22). Certainly, Cordaid compensated the decreased funding from the Dutch government by tapping into other governments funding, its financial dependency actually raised from 57.5% in 2010 to 73.7% in 2014. Interestingly, in the period 2016-2020, Cordaid received around €13 million yearly from the Dutch government (Schulpen 2016, 22).

On the contrary, ICCO was not able to regain full financial strength after the cut in government funding in 2011. From 2010 to 2011, the income of ICCO decreased from €103 million to €70 million. In 2012, ICCO's income amounted to €97 million, yet in following years the budget decreased once again. For the organization's income ICCO was able to gain mostly subsidies granted by non-Dutch governments – ICCO thus remained high dependency on government subsidies for large parts of their income yet not solely on the Dutch government. The organizations' own fundraising activities increased in 2010 and 2011 to €500.000 but decreased profoundly in 2014 again. Finally in 2020, ICCO received a relatively low amount of €6 million in subsidies from the Dutch government (Schulpen, 2016, 22). To grasp why ICCO had more difficulties recovering from the cuts in funding, it is important to understand that ICCO was founded as an organization connected to Protestant churches that profited from a high degree of financial and ideological independence yet receiving support from the Dutch government. Although on an administrative level ICCO had connections to churches and the international ecumenical movement, at a grassroots levels ICCO was quite distanced from the church public. More so, fundraising was not necessary for ICCO and therefore, the organization enjoyed a lot of freedom for making its own decisions for many years. In other words, the organization was able to take unpopular political standpoints and pursued goals that were often controversial in the eyes of churchgoers. As a consequence, for years ICCO was a strong, large and professionally respected organization in the field

of development cooperation – with links to the Protestant church and the international ecumenical movement but without the appeal among the Dutch public (also not to Protestants) (Rickli, 2010). With this overall picture of changing demands from the Dutch government for receiving funding and an overview of the loss of income for Cordaid and ICCO, this chapter will consider how the organizations have adapted to their loss of income and changing requirements.

6.2 Adapting to the Co-Funding System

Since Cordaid lost most of its previously stable governmental funding, already in 2011, the organization reformed in order to cope with the changes. Cordaid's application for the co-funding system for the period 2011-2015 was presented in a policy framework, 'Together for Change: Communities of Change' (Communities for Change, 2011). The application document formed both the strategic plan for Cordaid and guiding line for specific programs and projects. A new geographical and thematic concentration was created and the key focus theme of the organization shifted. Five overarching program proposals, that each presented a certain aspect of the policy framework, were presented: conflict transformation, disaster risk reduction, health and well-being, entrepreneurship and slum dwellers. Indeed, Cordaid would increase its focus on fragile states and areas affected by conflict. As described in the yearly report of 2013, the organization claimed its experience in these areas and therefore its ability to generate change. The community-based approach remained and while the names of programs were replaced, Cordaid was able to remain presence in certain countries (Cordaid, 2013; Communities for Change, 2011). Interestingly, Cordaid mentions the challenges that have come with (program) changes and the increasing focus on reporting back explicitly. The organization went through a time of transformation that meant the end of traditional governmental co-funding as well as giving patterns to private donors and an increase in reporting back to constituents (Cordaid, 2013, 9):

> So internal (reporting) systems have been adjusted to accommodate new ways of working and our commitment to transparency. Internally, a cultural shift means personnel have to make a transition from old to new ways of working - always a tough task. Training programs have been put in place to help make the change. The Quality Manual and working processes had to be adapted as well to the new way of working. Internal cohesion, also to prevent duplication of effort, was strengthened through increased internal communication efforts. Progress was measured constantly through employee surveys managed by our Human Resources team.

Even more, Cordaid mentions how carrying out evaluations, testing the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of programs and activities on the hand helps the organization and on the other secures receiving funding from the government (Cordaid, 2013, 23). In other annual reports, concepts such as *capacity building, training programs, resilience* and *self-reliance* are mentioned frequently (Cordaid, 2014; Cordaid, 2015).

In response to the changes in funding, ICCO formed the ICCO Alliance with coPrisma, Edukans, Kerk in Actie, Share People, Yente, Zeister Zendingsgenootschap – with ICCO as lead agency. ICCO had a

rather limited fundraising capacity and expertise and, as mentioned before, a weak relationship with the general public. The organizations therefore decided to find partners with experience in this field and a faithful body of supporters (Rickli, 2010). Now, the application for the Ministry funding was submitted by the ICCO Alliance 'Operational Plan' and therefore a lot more feasible. The achievements report also mentions the impact of decreased funding (MFSII Progress Report, 2015, 20):

> Throughout the MFSII period, the prospect of diminished funding continued to cast a long shadow over our capacity development activities. Despite the value of face-to face events in facilitating joint approaches and passing on skills to local partners, most ICCO Cooperation programs discontinued such meetings by the end of 2013, which in turn impacted on trust building and opportunities for joint learning and monitoring. In the last two years of MFSII therefore, capacity development focused on developing capacities for networking, L&A, acquisition and fundraising.

In the same vein as Cordaid, ICCO mentions in their annual report of 2010 how programs have been built around concepts of *capacity development*, *instruments* and *accountability.* Furthermore, the organization mentions how since 2010 activities focused on a monitoring protocol and evaluations to fulfill requirements of governmental funding (ICCO, 2010).

During interviews with experts of the field, the changes that Cordaid and ICCO made in order to adapt to the government was also discussed. To the question to what extent Cordaid and ICCO have – under the influence of governmental funding – professionalized and to a certain point secularized, it was mentioned that,

> The organizations are still present in their particular international networks. Furthermore, their use of Christian words in reports and policy documents is still present and definite part of people involved still belief in this. However, a secular western agenda has been pushed upon these organizations and the question what remains.

Perhaps even more important, the expert mentioned how as a consequence of the funding system, organizations have been forced to work project-based, with clear-cut results, therefore working with large organizations rather than in smaller networks. As a result, differences between NGOs and religious NGOs are barely visible anymore.

6.3 Shifting to a 'business'-like model

In the expert interview, the consequences of Cordaid and ICCO's shift to a more professional and 'business-like model' was discussed,

> While new employees are hired based on their professionalization, less attention is paid to their religious background. In practice, these employees are confronted with religious expressions in the south that they are not familiar with. How to maintain long-standing relationships with churches when religion is not recognized?

Indeed, in 2013 Cordaid published the *Theory of Change,* in which the organization's described that while its mission remains the same: ''those who suffer the consequences of poverty, exclusion and injustice'' (Cordaid, 2013, 1), circumstances have changed over the years and therefore Cordaid takes

on a new course characterized by social entrepreneurship (Cordaid, 2013). The shift towards social entrepreneurship focuses on efficient pursuit of social returns for all world citizens and towards transparent and innovative investment in social impact – and is linked to a decline in income. Indeed, focus on investment instead of financing is at the core of the concept of social entrepreneurship. In *Theory of Change* Cordaid furthermore describes how the organization has to concern itself with creating *transformational solutions*, focused on *fragile communities* and based on business models (Cordaid, 2013, 9):

> We work as social change agents; we innovate and are committed to creative problem solving; we produce social value that is transformational; our value propositions target underserved, neglected or disadvantaged people in fragile communities; we use business models but operate as a non-profit CSO.

A couple of years before Cordaid, ICCO initiated a change process focusing on co-responsibility in 2007 – one that better fits with 'the world of today' (ICCO, 2009). With the so-called implementation of ProCoDe, a new model was implemented characterized by working programmatic, assuming that in the complex battle of poverty reduction, cooperation between stakeholders and different perspectives (ICCO, 2008). Even more, since 2009, *accountability* has become an important part of ICCO. Exemplary, new employees are trained on multiple levels and software implemented in order to follow projects and programs more closely. Furthermore, monitoring on the levels of partners, *downward accountability* was implemented after 2010 through a two-year pilot. The central goal is to provide instruments to partner organizations for a more open relationship, that also provides ICCO with better accountability measures. ICCO later expanded this shift (ICCO, 2016):

> In 2016 we developed a new monitoring and evaluation system in which the most important goals, results, indicators, targets and program scores are recorded in the Program Monitoring and Evaluation (ProMEva) database. The database includes information on the program logic, geo-locations and value for money of different programs. In addition, it is linked to AllSolutions, a financial information service. ProMEva presents tailor-made dashboards with management information for the various levels of the organization. ICCO is also affiliated with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Information in ProMEva can be exported in accordance with the IATI standard.

Certainly, programs of the organizations are applied to a new framework, that collects a core set of unform data relating to the core themes of ICCO, enabling employees and partners to learn and be informed (ICCO, 2012).

6.4 Conclusion

Without a doubt, debates concerning the delivery and quality of development aid that forced the development field into becoming more ´business/like´, with emphasis put on measurable results and effective use of scarce resources – as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis – have hit Cordaid and ICCO. Exemplary, monitoring and evaluation systems have been implemented on (indirect) request

of the government. Indeed, as demonstrated by annual reports and policy frameworks discussed in this chapter, Cordaid and ICCO have been under pressure of demonstrating their capabilities to be feasible for government funding – while receiving less funding each year. The organizations have to align their practices with the appropriate model of action and meet criteria that is defined by the government and Cordaid and ICCO implemented measures and programs showing their accountability and made their results visible through assessments. In this way, as Barnett and Stein argue (2012) processes of bureaucratization and increased professionalization are implemented and as mentioned by the expert, the organizations differentiate barely from non-religious NGOs anymore. Furthermore, regarding the shifts in governmental funding it becomes clear that – at least in their presentation of programs and applications for government funding – Cordaid and ICCO use concepts that are identified with secular frames according to Ager and Ager (2011) and Barnett and Stein (2012), such as *capacity building, training, self-reliance* and *-determination.* Yet while the organizations have answered to demands of showing their effectives and having to increasingly think about methods of engagements, this does not prohibit Cordaid and ICCO from imputing a deep moral worth into their policies and actions. Indeed, while some authors may argue that interpretations of theological thinking have secularized, the next analytical chapter and final chapter of this study will show that Cordaid and ICCO sanctify the secular and secularization of religious life as well.

7. Analysis 2: Faith and the Sacred within Cordaid and ICCO

This second analytical chapter will discuss the changes and continuities of faith in Cordaid and ICCO, questioning *how have Cordaid and ICCO changed and continued giving meaning to faith and the sacred in their organizations?* To do so, this chapter will first look at the historical background and current use of Catholic Social Teachings and Christian Social Teachings and at language use of Cordaid and ICCO in their documentation to assess implicit and explicit use of religious references. Secondly, this chapter will look into particular themes of development that are of importance for Cordaid and ICCO as so-called boundary markers. A closer look at the historical account of ICCO and the organization's connection to the Protestant church will be provided, followed by Cordaid's policies on sexual and reproductive health and the values that drive the organization. Importantly, the particular cases are not subject to research in themselves but serve to show boundary marking between religion and the secular.

7.1 Cordaid's Religious References and Language Use

Firstly, when viewing annual reports of Cordaid, it is interesting to take a look the mission and vision of the organization. Exemplary, in 2017, the opening of the annual report refers to values of Catholic Social Teachings, stating (Cordaid, 2018, 5):

> The overriding challenge in fragile and conflict-affected countries is restoring trust and social cohesion. This is what Cordaid does, right in the heart of communities, by mobilising global networks, resources and knowledge. By linking relief and development, we support people to move beyond survival and live in dignity.

Those who know the Catholic social thought will read these between the lines of the annual reports. In the statutes of Cordaid, the values of Catholic social teachings are explicitly mentioned as the pillars of Cordaid's mission. Following these Catholic Social Teachings, Cordaid places the notion of human dignity at the centre of the organisation's policies and practices. Exemplary, protecting the dignity of women and man is one of the primaries objectives within policies of sexual and reproductive rights. Catholic social thinking shapes, with principles of human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity the sharp pointers for the work of Cordaid as Catholic development organization. Churches have an important role in service provision and community building in developing countries – although the criticism on some parts, such as HIV and aids, is in place. Certainly, the Catholic Social Teachings have an important role in processes of change and for the build towards a more justice and sustainable world. The four pillars of Catholic social thought are specifically (Grotenhuis, 2015, 3):

1. Human dignity: created after the image of God, every human has an intrinsic dignity that should be respected in and by society.
2. Common good: the flourishing of the human family as a whole should be the aim of our actions in society.
3. Subsidiarity: create the freedom for people and communities to contribute to the flourishing of the human family.
4. Solidarity: share our means with those who suffer from poverty, oppression, and lack of freedom.

Since Catholic Social Teachings are mentioned frequently and explicitly by Cordaid, it is worthwhile to look at the historical background of these teachings. Pope Leo XIII wrote in 1891 the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, as a response to the issues and challenges of social life in the nineteenth century as a consequence of the industrial revolution. The Catholic Church analyzed the industrial revolution and the rise of Marxism, and Pope Leo XIII asked for dignity for the working class, for their rights and a human worthy existence. Over decades, these first social teachings have been further developed and refined to the natural laws of humankind and primary communities, such as rights to life, property, to livelihood, a just wage and the right to association (Bovendonk, 2011). As Bovendonk mentions, Catholic Social Teachings nowadays find their place where Christian life and Christian conscience meet situations of the world and for Cordaid, remains an inspiration to undertake action to promote justice and dignity. This historical background is essential in order to understand how and why today can still tap into these teachings for a deeper sense of purpose – and perhaps create a sense of sacredness. Indeed, as Barnett and Stein (2012) argue, elements of everyday life and the profane integrate themselves. Certainly, since the teachings are founded on the basis of daily-life problems of the working class, the teachings since have evolved around the notion that the Church has to be able to, from the basis of faith, provide answers and needs to social circumstances of that time. Exemplary, Pope Benedictus XVI states in *Populorum Progressio* that the issues of the financial crisis and glocalisation are worldwide and places critical sidenotes to processes of globalization when it adversely affects human dignity (Bovendonk, 2011). Consequently, Cordaid is able to connect the Catholic Social Teachings to processes of globalization (Grotenhuis, 2015),

> Globalization has pervaded every aspect of life and affected every human being. Small farmers in Mali, slum dwellers in Manila, and factory workers in Mexico are all part of an increasingly integrated global economy. In this process, making a profit for owners and shareholders has become the driver of the economy, reducing people and nature to instruments of production used to maximize profits. The consequence is the exploitation of people and nature. By promoting its moral principles, CST is clearly advocating an economy that puts humans and nature in the center and respects human dignity and creation, rather than manipulating workers around the globe.

To conclude, Catholic Social Teachings thus provide Cordaid with a means to draw on values and ethics in their policies, programs and practices and in this way, create a sense of the sacred that exists within secularism (Barnett and Stein, 2012). On the basis of the Catholic Social Teachings, sacred values and ethics are created and protected from a space that is separate from the profane.

7.2 ICCO's Religious References and Language Use

On the contrast to Cordaid, ICCO as a Protestant organization is less explicit in their use of language with religious references. Certainly, the mission and vision of Cordaid are described as (ICCO Foundation, 2018, 7),

A just world without poverty and exclusion. A world where people can secure their livelihoods and live in dignity. Empowered people that build sustainable livelihoods within a society that upholds their rights.

ICCO has worked on three main programs for years, focusing on sustainable economic development by empowering small business owners and workers through improved market access; democratization and peace building through decentralized political decision-making processes and accountability on all levels of politics; and third, provide access to basic needs such as education, food, water and health care, specifically in the field of HIV and Aids (ICCO, 2008; 2009). The mere absence of religious language use and references has to be considered against historical contexts of ICCO. As Bartelink (2016, 86) mentions, during the 1970s ICCO was active in the World Council of Churches, that was centered around liberation theology. In a nutshell, liberation theology holds that it is the responsibility of Christians to transform the world to become more equal and is critical of the development model in which aid is transferred from 'western' countries to 'developing' countries. For ICCO, liberation theology became a source of inspiration on how to look at Christian development cooperation and while the funding relationship with the Dutch government remained, ICCO's network shifted from traditional missionary activities to NGOs (active in developing countries). ICCO centralized the agency of 'the poor' and consequently, ties with older church and missionary networks were limited while networks with secular organizations were build. The liberation theology as an inspiration for ICCO and their changes towards secular networks in the 1970s shows how ICCO is able to be presented as a 'neutral' and thereby secular organization. ICCO was seen as a neutral organization by the Dutch government and as mentioned by Bartelink (2016, 86), ''the shift emerging from a concern with the 'agency of the poor' re-affirmed the very kind of unequal power relations between development donors and recipients that was criticized in 'liberation theology'. Rather than a radical critique of inequality, it appears to be much more a secularizing tendency.'' Interestingly, following the inspiration and network shifts of ICCO, new Protestant development organizations emerged within the Netherlands to represent more orthodox protestant groups. After the 1970s, when more emphasis was put on professionalization, ICCO continued the shift it made in the 1970s and started to focus more specifically on human rights, democratization and gender in their development discourse. Although the organization was still inspired by discourses of the World Council of Churches, its language become more secular and ICCO's discourses on rights and social justice were accepted more widely. As Bartelink notes, ICCO's identification as a Christian organization was no longer self-evident. The organization's religion in relation to its organizational identity has been redefined and new meanings to religion have been attributed. At the same time, the Protestant Netherlands Missionary Council started separating development from missionary work. In this separation, ICCO was presented as a Protestant development organization and while mission activities of the Protestant church were continued in Kerkinactie, an organization separated from ICCO (Bartelink, 2016). Years later the ICCO Alliance developed core values based on Christian social thought: charity, justice and integrity of creation and in the mission

statement of ICCO cooperation three Christian values are mentioned as well: compassion, justice and stewardship (ICCO Cooperation, 2012). What remains for ICCO – in contrast to Cordaid – is a stronger redefinition of boundaries between religious and the secular, exemplified in a less explicit use of religious language and references while standing in a network of secular development organizations. This does not mean that ICCO is not a religious organization, but a result of religion and the secular coming together in the fight against poverty.

7.3 Cordaid's Approach to the Issues of Sexual and Reproductive Health

Development is a professionalized field and development organizations have the responsibility to serve people in the best and professional way possible. Indeed, normally professional knowledge informs Cordaid's programs, policies and practices, yet sexual and reproductive health (hereafter: SRH) is a development challenge that forms a conflict between faith and evidence-based professional work. Certainly, as mentioned by former director of Cordaid René Grotenhuis, Cordaid is both a professional development organization and part of a broad and diverse worldwide Catholic community, which means there is an ongoing 'conversation' with the Church and hierarchy particularly on the issue of SRH. In the words of Grotenhuis (2014, 1061),

> On almost all other areas of development (microfinance, disaster response, peace building), Cordaid
> is given space to develop its policies and practices from a professional perspective and based on
> available evidence, except regarding sexual and reproductive health.

In their approach, Cordaid does not isolate SRH from other aspects of development but understands it within a wider context of various factors (economic, political, gender, etc.) that influence the reality of poverty. Indeed, over the last decades the issue of SRH has been brought together with issues of sexual violence and gender inequality while the Vatican has been critical of gender discourses and attacked gender theories in which sexual identity is seen as a sociological and cultural construct. For Cordaid, an organization that aimed to strengthen the link between the position of woman, this standpoint of the Vatican hindered an open conversation (Grotenhuis, 2014). During an expert interview the ongoing tension on the issue of SRH was also mentioned. Specifically, it was mentioned that Cordaid has to continue dialogue on issues of birth control and HIV prevention, since the organization depends on Bishops to be recognized as a Catholic organization that is present in the Vatican network.

Looking more into Cordaid's policies and how Cordaid's Catholic identity stands in possible contrast with SRH issues, certain programs and practices stand out. Since the 1990s a sharp distinction between contraceptives and abortion exists as abortion is never seen as a part of contraceptive strategies while active policies and programs on other contraceptives exist. Furthermore, human dignity as one of the principles of Catholic social teaching is central in Cordaid's SRH policies and in the words of Grotenhuis (2014, 1065), ''[p]rotecting the dignity of women and men is a primary objective of Cordaid's policy''. The sharp distinction between contraceptives and abortion and practice of this policy is exemplary for the abovementioned tension. Indeed, at the core of the policy protecting females against sexual and

empowering women by offering knowledge is an essential part of this policy, while health institutions are still struggling with official Church doctrine and the real life needs of people. To avoid tensions, Cordaid's policies on SRH are based on notions of informed decision-making principles and empowerment for people to take their responsibility. In other words, Cordaid doesn't prescribe people what to do but helps make people decisions based on the best available information (Grotenhuis, 2014). This particular approach to SRH shows the constant tension of Cordaid as a Catholic organization that has to relate to the Vatican, its own beliefs and moralities and a mere secular environment in the Netherlands. Although Cordaid has taken standpoints in some occasion, policies of informed decision making and empowerment for people exemplify a certain 'hands-off' approach to maintain balance.

7.4 Conclusion

According to Barnett and Stein, sanctification is the process in which meaning of the sacred is created, that is separate from the profane. In practice, in Cordaid and ICCO this can be witnessed looking at their references to values and ethics and by their historical contexts on religious inspiration. Within Cordaid, references to a deeper sense of purpose to their actions are more explicit, while ICCO is considerably less explicit. Particularly the historical background of the Catholic Social Teachings, which are founded in real and everyday life of the working class, have created a space for Cordaid to make religious references without being controversial to the general public. At the same time, the HIV/Aids case shows that Cordaid has to relate itself to the Vatican, a mere secular environment in the Netherlands and its own belief and moralities. Policies of informed decision making and empowerment for people exemplify the 'hands-off' approach that has been taken on board to maintain balance. ICCO is less explicit in its use of religious language but this does not mean that ICCO is necessarily 'more' secular. Even more, liberation theology may conform to secular norms but it also shows a redefinition of what is secular and what is religious. With the separation between development and missionary work by the Protestant Netherlands Missionary Council, ICCO has become part of a network of secular development organizations and while references to Christian values are made, this is less explicit since ICCO does not have to relate to a religious institute. In the same vein as for Cordaid, networks are of importance. In this chapter, the core of the argument of Barnett and Stein (2012) can be found in the evolvements of ICCO and Cordaid. Processes of sanctification of secular, which means that creation of the sacred, establishment and protection of a space that is viewed as pure and separate from the profane, as well as secularization of religious life, by which elements of the everyday and the profane become more integrated into humanitarianism, can be witnessed. For Cordaid and ICCO, the processes create new forms and meaning of the sacred in daily life, that are continuously redefined and subject to change.

8. The Fusion of Cordaid and ICCO in 2021

In January 2021, ICCO and Cordaid officially announced and signed their fusion. Since then, the name ICCO is no longer active as both organizations are now called Cordaid. Furthermore, the complete personnel of ICCO moved into the building of Cordaid in The Hague. In the newspaper announcement, particular attention is paid to the expected savings (estimated 5 to 10 million euros per year) due to the changes made. Indeed, it is mentioned that while a decade ago Cordaid was the largest NGO in the Netherlands and ICCO present in the top five, due to changes in the governmental funding system the organizations had to conquer each other on price and quality – key selection criteria for the governmental funding system. As mentioned by the director of Cordaid, Kees Zevenbergen, ''Joining forces helps us to continue to work efficiently and effectively'' (Nauta, 2021). Furthermore, it is mentioned that in different terrains Catholic and Protestant organizations have fusion and that due to the financial need, it is now time for development organizations to take this step.

In another interview, Zevenbergen mentions how both organizations have become more separated from their churches over the years, yet at the same time share a Christian fundament that binds the organizations strongly. Exemplary, the Cordaid director mentions that both organizations speak the language of church leaders in development countries, which is particularly important in the battle against aids- and sexual health (Nauta, 2021b).

In 2014, René Grotenhuis also reflected on the challenge of Cordaid combining professionalism of a development organization with its Catholic identity, the former director states how professionalism and Catholicism are two aspects of Cordaid's identity that are in constant dialogue. Particularly in relation to the practice in the area of sexual and reproductive health, Cordaid is in constant dilemma of Church doctrine and the real life needs of people.

Indeed, Grotenhuis argues (Grotenhuis, 2014, 1065),

> A Catholic development organization working in sexual and reproductive health cannot distance itself from Pope Paul VI's encyclical Humanae Vitae. Its call for true and respectful love, its warnings against political misuse of birth control and a self-centered sexuality are well placed and more than ever relevant today.

Years before this fusion, former director of Cordaid René Grotenhuis furthermore argued that Cordaid diversifies itself from other development organizations by its specific way it uses love and God in its battle against suffering and injustice. Grotenhuis discusses in his book that the meaning of the Catholic identity of Cordaid an important question is both in development countries as well as in the Netherlands. Exemplary, traditionally Cordaid spends around 45 percent of its budget on churches or church related organizations. In secular Netherlands, where the influence and power of the Catholic church is resigning each year and the number of Catholics is declining, Cordaid remains the largest NGO in the Netherlands. This apparent contradict raises the question whether Cordaid is only a remainder of the recent pillarized history, or whether the specific identity makes the organization a meaningful player on the terrain of international development cooperation (Grotenhuis, 2008, 127).

In the same vein, in an expert interview the following was mentioned,

> Cordaid and ICCO have been founded according to pillarization as was present in the Netherlands, yet over the years the Dutch public has shifted from their former pillars to certain goals (e.g., emergency aid, cancer research, etc.). Therefore, the fusion is now issue in the Netherlands.
>
> In their core, ICCO and Cordaid have always been organizations used as an instrument for worldwide solidarity. The organizations as instruments fit well together to increase effectivity in worldwide solidary. Last, the fusion is possible since Cordaid's and ICCO's general humanitarian and religious values (solidarity and compassion) are shared.

The fusion of Cordaid and ICCO has undoubtably been born out of financial need and a pressing force of the Dutch government to conquer for prices and quality. Yet at the same time, a shifting relationship with the Dutch general public and the Catholic and Protestant churches have led to the organizations focusing more specifically on their shared humanitarian and religious values and it is therefore that the fusion is actually possible. According to an expert, the question that remains is how will Cordaid now relate to its own identity – as a wide Christian development organization or as a professional NGO?

9. Conclusion

Dutch Christian NGOs cannot be assigned to a purely religious nor a purely secular framework. Rather, as has been explored in this thesis, religion and the secular are closely intertwined in organizations, policies and practices of Cordaid and ICCO. This study has shown interest in how religious NGOs are influenced by development frames of religion and the secular and follows the theoretical framework and operational framework of Barnett and Stein (2012).

On the basis of the literature review, in which the evolvement of the development field from Christian missionaries in colonial times to a shift into a 'business-like' and professionalized model has been discussed, a focus on professionalization and rationalization is firstly provided. This first analytical chapter shows how Cordaid and ICCO have been forced to put emphasis on results and measurable practices. The organizations have to align their practices with the appropriate model of action and meet criteria that is defined by the government. Importantly, Cordaid and ICCO implemented measures and programs showing their accountability and made their results visible through assessments. Importantly, concepts that have been identified with secular frames are used often by the organizations and the difference between religious and non-religious NGOs have blurred – at least in part due to forces of professionalization and bureaucratization. However, the second analytical chapter shows that while strong forces impact the organization's, their religious identities are historically grounded and space for a moral worth into Cordaid ICCO's practices persists. Cordaid's Catholic Social Teachings are based on real, everyday life challenges of the working class and it is this particular background that has allowed Cordaid to sanctify these principles while being uncontroversial. ICCO is less explicit in its use of religious language and with religious reference. For the organization, liberation theology became a source of inspiration in the 1970s, leading the organization to loosening ties with churches and missionary networks while relations. The organization focused on human rights, democratization and gender in its development discourse and while later core values were based on Christian social thought. Importantly, ICCO has had a stronger redefinition of boundaries between religious and the secular with less explicit use of religious language, but in a similar vein to Cordaid, has been able engage in processes of sanctification around the general fight against poverty. Indeed, the core of Barnett and Stein's (2012) argument has been found here. Both Cordaid and ICCO, while being subject to increasingly secular forces, have been able to engage in processes to form meaning, a deep moral worth and sacredness in daily life. Last, his study has shown interest in the fusion between Cordaid and ICCO in January 2021. Taking the forces of professionalization, rationalization, funding, networks, and the communication around the fusion into consideration – the fusion seems a rather rational decision. However, for a long time the fusion between a Catholic and Protestant organization would not be considered. Indeed, the fusion of Cordaid and ICCO can be viewed in the context of the focus points of this study and while it may be born out of financial need, the fusion has only been actually possible due to a shifted relationship with the Dutch public, decreased connectedness to churches and a more general focus on humanitarian and religious values by the organizations.

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