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The role of NGOs in development initiatives: an analysis of effective participation and representation in Ghana

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The Role of NGOs in Development Initiatives:

An Analysis of Effective Participation and Representation in Ghana

by

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the factors that affect grassroots participation in development initiatives and the ability of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to act as effective grassroots representatives. This research finds that NGOs with 'social movement' roots demonstrate superior abilities to act as effective grassroots representatives and promote more effective participation in development initiatives. These NGOs display higher capacities and willingness to access and gain input from grassroots actors compared to international or elite initiated NGOs. The latter are more likely to view themselves as 'experts' and have greater physical and social distance to grassroots actors.   These results are illustrated through field observations and interviews with NGO staffs, donors, and community members in Ghana, as well as NGO literature and reports, and an extensive review of the relevant academic literature. This research seeks to address a gap within development literature that fails to consider NGOs' roles as grassroots representatives in development.

Acknowledgements

To Ella,

For making everything take more time,

And for making everything more enjoyable.

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List of Symbols, Abbreviations and Nomenclature

Symbol	Definition
AAG	ActionAid Ghana
AAI	ActionAid International
CARE	CARE International
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPC	Canadian Parliamentary Centre
DAWN	Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DWM	The December 31st Women's Movement
ECSELL	Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level
EU	European Union
GARI	Ghana Accountability and Responsiveness Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GRAP	Ghana Research and Advocacy Program
HR	Human Rights
HRAO*	Human Rights Advocacy Organization
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LCDD	Local and Community Driven Development
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORRIP	Northern Region Rural Integrated Program
NPP	New Patriotic Party
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PSC	Public Service Contractor
RAVI	Rights and Voices Initiative
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SDO*	Sport Development Organization
SNGO	Southern Non-Governmental Organization
TUC	Trade Union Congress
TWN	Third World Network (A Ghanaian NGO)

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VO	Voluntary Organization
Wacam	A Ghanaian NGO, Formerly WACAM: an acronym for Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining
WB	World Bank
*Pseudonym	

The Emergence of NGOs and an Alternative Development Model

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) began to emerge in development in the 1970s as part of an alternative model to state-led or macro-level development initiatives.[1] There are differing views on how and why NGOs emerged as significant actors in development. One view contends that at the end of the 1970s with the US defeat in Vietnam, the American policy environment was such that there began to be recognition that "military power and coercion alone had been unable to deal with social movements.[2]" The foreign policy establishment thus began to realize the importance of civil society. Since opposition to authoritarian rule had emerged within civil society, it became an important part of American foreign policy to intervene in the organs of civil society and build alliances there. According to this view, by the late 1980s and 1990s there was a strong Western convergence on the desire to shape civil society in the global South, alongside an international environment that legitimized this policy.[3]

In this context, NGOs are understood to have been reborn as a part of neo-liberal policy. Within neoliberal economics and liberal democratic theory, NGOs are the preferred channels for service delivery over the state. Stephen Commins explains that since the 1980s, NGOs have occupied privileged positions in both the public eye and with bilateral donors: "Particularly during the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s, NGOs were seen as the most effective and

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[1] Rajesh Tandou, "Riding high or nosediving?", *Development in Practice* 10 (3), (2000): 320.
[2] Julie Hearn, "The US Democratic Experiment in Ghana," In ed. Tunde Zack-Williams, Diane Frost, and Alex Thomson, *Africa in Crisis: New Challenges and Possibilities*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002): 98-99
[3] Hearn, "The US Democratic Experiment," 98-99; Takis Fotopoulos, Takis, "The End of Traditional Anti-Systemic Movements and the Need for a New Type of Anti-systemic Movement Today," *Democracy & Nature* 7 3, (2001): 443

efficient entities for delivering international relief and development programmes.[4]" This is partly because NGOs have presented themselves as having a significant humanitarian impact, along with donor aversion to supporting African governments that they often perceive as inefficient and corrupt. Governments, in this belief, should simply provide an enabling environment rather than directly providing services to citizens.[5] According to this view, NGO participation in development stems from a political climate championed by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which projects NGOs as addressing problems in a manner that cannot be matched by government (i.e. that they are efficient private sector actors). NGOs are viewed as better able to work with grassroots organizations and put together projects with minimal financial and technical assistance.[6]

In contrast to the above literature's focus on external foreign policy reasons for Western countries' and NGOs' engagement in development activities in Africa, Felix Edoho focuses on the internal necessity in Africa, to explain the emergence of NGO activity in development there. He traces the proliferation of NGOs in Africa to the earlier proliferation of military regimes and depressing economic circumstances. He explains that NGO activity expanded in Africa after independence, since military regimes often banned political parties and democratic participation. The depressing economic environment in Africa also brought NGO help—at first as relief and disaster assistance—and later missionaries were able to expand faith-based activities and

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[4] Stephen Commins, "NGOs: Ladles in the Global Soup Kitchen?" in ed. Jenny Pearce, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: Selected Essays from Development in Practice*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000): 70, 71
[5] Edoho, "Strategic Repositioning of NGOs," 208
[6] Korba Puplampu, Korba P, "State-NGO Relations and Agricultural Sector Development," in ed. Wisdom J. Tettey, Korbla P. Puplampu and Bruce J. Berman, *Critical Perspectives in Politics and Socio-Economic Development in Ghana*, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003): 137

education through NGOs.[7] The emerging theory that the causes of poverty were not 'natural' but rather structural and that 'development' was the best form of disaster prevention helped foster the development industry and NGO activity in development.[8]

Another view suggests that NGOs emerged independently in response to oppressive domestic situations. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, some authors saw civil society organizations as holding government accountable and pushing forward democratization. NGOs began to flourish as 'self-provisioning' and 'self-regulating' communities, contrary to the intrusive and normative state, and were able to meet the needs of people under an unresponsive political system.[9] Veltmeyer and Petras agree that NGOs emerged as a safe-haven for dissent during dictatorships, but argue that different types of NGOs emerged for different reasons. With the rise of mass movements that challenged imperial hegemony in Africa, popular revolts 'loosened the purse strings of overseas agencies' who wanted to quell populist/anti-capitalist uprisings and NGOs were given money to 'put out the fire.[10]'

Other authors argue that although NGOs may have emerged in response to oppressive government policies or during times of mass movements against government inaction, these internal 'problems' were often caused by external factors. According to this view, NGOs began to proliferate widely in Africa due to the gaps in social welfare left by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The combination of fewer resources for the state (under SAPs) and foreign aid being channelled through NGOs led to a situation in which NGO development work served

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[7] Edoho, 212-216

[8] Deborah Eade, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: A Development in Practise Reader*, (Oxford: Oxfam, GB, 2000): 9

[9] Eade, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society,* 10-11; Edoho, 204

[10] James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing Ltd, 2001): 130-131

as a 'safety net' for African petit bourgeoisie.[11] The UN, the World Bank, and the IMF have delegated aid programs to NGOs in order to fill the gap that African governments and private sectors were unable to manage.[12]

By the mid 1990s, the work that NGOs were doing was highly visible all over the world, and there was a large increase in the flow of resources going to NGOs.[13] This has continued to increase and according to one source transfers of official development assistance (ODA) aid from 'developed' countries to NGOs worldwide in 2006 totalled more than $2 billion.[14] ODA to Ghana (to all sources) in 2007 totalled around USD$1.236 billion.[15]

NGOs in Ghana

As NGOs emerged in development all over Africa, they inevitably entered Ghana and became part of the development structure. As in other African countries, Kwame Ninsin ties the emergence of NGOs in Ghana to internal liberal economic reforms: the proliferation of advocacy NGOs in Ghana was likely a response to the disempowerment of the vast majority of the people due to growing poverty.[16] He argues that market reforms have made Ghanaians poorer both as individuals and as communities or groups of workers, farmers, and so on. A variety of foreign and local sources have thus had to intervene in order to provide necessary services that the state is either unable to provide or considered inefficient in providing. Ninsin argues that foreign

[11] Julie Hearn, "African NGOs: The New Compradors?" *Development and Change* 38, 6, (2007): 1102

[12] Robert A Dibie, ed., *Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa,* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008): 3

[13] Catherine Agg, "Winners or Losers?" *Development* 49, (2) (2006): 15.

[14] Gayle Allard and Candyce Agrella Martinez, "The Influence of Government Policy and NGOs on Capturing Private Investment," *Global Forum on International Investment VII, 27-28 March 2008*, accessed on May 1st, 2012 at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/24/33/40400836.pdf

[15] Matthew Geddes et al., *Ghana Country Study: OECD-DAC PDE Thematic Study on Untied Aid*, (London: Overseas Development Institute, October 2009): 4.

[16] Kwame Ninsin, "Markets and Liberal Democracy," in ed. Kwame Boafo-Arthur, *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2007).

donor states often view private organizations as more acceptable than many African governments (which are viewed as more likely to be corrupt), and private interests have "progressively assumed responsibility for social reproduction instead of the state.[17]"

Organized political action by citizens to put pressure on government in Ghana has been rare, and civil society groups usually mediate successful protests. The Third World Network (TWN), for example, became the voice of communities in Ghana adversely affected by the government's release of portions of forest reserves in the Western Region to mining interests.[18]

Ninsin also argues that the proliferation of NGOs creates a 'snowball' effect because NGOs gain power when they are given responsibility for development, and with this responsibility for development comes more power. He explains how private interests (including NGOs) are slowly appropriating political space and power while the state is forced to relinquish it. "The country's development partners have become part of the emerging structure of national power.[19]" The state is being constrained by neo-liberal economic prescriptions that cause the general population of citizens to lose faith in democratic institutions. At the same time, NGOs in Ghana are able to take advantage of this situation, enter into areas of usual state control and therefore gain the faith of the people as representatives and promoters of development, acting as the people's voice to bring development to the poor and marginalized.[20]

NGOs and Grassroots Participation

NGOs are now clearly entrenched within the current development model. Due to their foundations as a part of an 'alternative' development paradigm to the state, NGOs represent a

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[17] Ninsin, "Markets," 94, 100.
[18] Ibid, 92, 93.
[19] Ibid, 101.
[20] Ibid, 100, 101

shift towards local level development (in contrast to national) with a focus on local priorities, local participation in development, and collective mobilization and conscientization.

With the emergence of NGOs and their 'alternative' development paradigm as visible global development actors, came a transformation in the development agenda itself. By the mid 1980s participation had ascended into development discourse orthodoxy in coordination with 'sustainable development,' capacity building, and 'results-based' approaches.[21] By the mid-1990s the so-called 'mainstream' development actors (the United Nations, the Breton Woods Institutions, and national governments) were changing their discourse to reflect this new paradigm. These changes were in part a response to the failure of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The 'new' development paradigm explained that development had failed because of its 'top-down' approach, and what was needed was simply a new 'people-friendly' 'bottom-up' or 'grassroots' approach to development.[22] Along with human rights, 'good governance,' 'local development,' 'mobilization of the poor,' and 'participation' began to make their way more and more frequently into the discourse and policy statements of international development organizations like the UN and World Bank. By 2004, the WB was advocating empowerment and 'community-driven development.[23]' Today, it is widely accepted that

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[21] Pablo Alejandro Leal, "Participation: The Ascendancy of a Buzzword in the Neo-liberal era", *Development in Practice* 17, (4), (2007): 539.

[22] Leal, "Participation: The Ascendancy of a Buzzword," 540.

[23] Andrea Cornwall, "Historical Perspectives on Participation in Development", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 44, no.1 (2006): 64, and Hans Binswanger-Mkhize, Jacomina P de Regt and Stephen Spector (eds), *Local and Community Driven Development: Moving to Scale in Theory and Practise*, Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank, 2010.

successful development efforts include avenues for community participation to meet the unique

needs of each community.[24]

 The current development focus on local priorities, participation, and development from

'below' generally refers to participation by communities at the 'grassroots.[25]' But if this is the

case, it is necessary to investigate who is included in the terms 'community' or 'grassroots,' and

what exactly do the concepts participation and representation mean to different development

actors? NGOs have moved into mainstream development agendas because of their perceived

value as 'grassroots' development agencies with ties to communities and outlets for community

participation in development. While many NGOs embrace this role as community

representatives and proponents of grassroots participation, all NGOs do not engage the

grassroots and serve as representatives of the 'voice of the people' in the same manner.

 There is a wide variety of literature that criticizes the supposed 'closeness' of NGOs to

the grassroots, as well as their ability to promote grassroots participation. A recent WB

publication for example, that proclaims the importance of local and community driven

development, argues that NGOs use community consultation and participation rather than

empowerment. The result, due to the NGOs' tight control over resources, is what they label as

'community based development' rather than 'community driven development.[26]'

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[24] Leal, "Participation", 539; Tandou, "Riding high", 321-323; Jan N Pieterse, "My Paradigm or Yours?," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 344; Ernest Y. Kunfaa, "Consultations with the Poor: Ghana Country Synthesis Report," *Report Commissioned by the World Bank*, (Kumasi: Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), 1999).
[25] Pieterse, "My Paradigm or Yours", 346; and Cornwall, "Historical Perspectives", 62-63.
[26] Hans Binswanger-Mkhize, et al, "Historical Roots and Evolution of Community Driven Development," In *Local and Community Driven Development,* (2010): 38, 192.

Research Questions

  This research seeks to investigate the above claims, through an investigation into the following questions: 1) Are NGOs able to fulfill their 'goal' of promoting effective grassroots participation in development initiatives and acting as effective representatives of the poor and marginalized? And 2) what constraints exist on their abilities to fulfill these goals?   These questions are approached in the following chapters through an analysis of how different NGOs operationalize the concepts of 'representation' and grassroots 'participation' in development initiatives, and the constraints that exist on the NGOs' abilities to act as effective representatives and promote effective participation at the grassroots level.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHOD

This research looks at NGOs' roles within the current development model to determine whether and how NGOs are able to act as effective representatives for people at the 'grassroots' and ensure popular participation in the development process. The main theory that is examined is how donor demands affect the process of representation and participation in development.

In order to achieve these objectives, this research compares the experiences and activities of eight NGOs, one donor project that supports NGOs and CSOs, and one foreign donor organization operating in Ghana, in conjunction with local elites and development actors, and community members in affected areas. The research uses in-depth interviews with staffs and local actors, observations at NGO workshops and activities, and NGO documents and literature for analysis.

Why Ghana? The Historical Context of Ghanaian Development

Development in Ghana

Ghana gained independence from Britain in 1957, the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to do so. At independence, Ghana was in a relatively good economic position: "It held foreign reserves of about US$481 million, and its gross domestic product (GDP) was on a par with those of Malaysia and South Korea. It could afford to provide assistance to some of its African neighbours.[27]" However, poverty and 'underdevelopment' have plagued the country since independence. Although poverty indicators and GNI per capita in Ghana have improved over the last 10 years, Ghana continues to have just under 30% of the population living below the

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[27] Dovi Efam, "Ghana's Economy: Hope Rekindled," *Africa Renewal Online*, (August 2010): 19, accessed on May 2nd, 2012 at http://www.un.org/en/africarenewal/vol24no2-3/ghana.html

national poverty line,[28] and is currently ranked 135th out of 187 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index.[29]

Participation and the State

International actors have played a strong role throughout pre- and post-independence Ghanaian history, exerting influence on Ghanaian affairs and affecting state behaviour.[30] The non-participatory state structures that were created under colonialism were maintained in the post-colonial state.[31] The colonial period therefore set in place a separation between participation and administration. Administrative structures were highly centralized, and decolonization did not lead to changes towards democratization of the administrative process.

After independence, Ghana continued to lack widespread participation in the administrative and development processes: during the instability in the 1970s, conflicts in Ghana were largely intra-elite struggles. Demands for policy change were generally manifested by urban elites whose positions were affected by state policy.[32]

The recent history of predominantly elite participation in the political and development processes set the stage for today's development initiatives. From this backdrop, Ghana provides an interesting case study to explore the application of new frameworks of participatory principles and the promotion of 'local and community driven' development.

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[28] The World Bank, "Data: Ghana," accessed on May 1st, 2012 at http://data.worldbank.org/country/ghana
[29] Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA Facts at a Glance, "Ghana," accessed on May 1st, 2012 at http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/En/JUD-222104547-LH6
[30] Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969- 1982*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983): 7.
[31] Chazan, *Ghanaian Politics,* 60-61, 63.
[32] Ibid, 243-244, 259.

The necessity to improve mechanisms for popular input in development in Ghana has become particularly salient with the discovery of oil in 2007.[33] With support from donor agencies, the government is in the process of revising the legal codes that govern oil exploration and production, local participation in this process, and revenue management.[34] Within this context, Ghana provides an excellent case study for analysis of grassroots participatory principles in development. Furthermore, Ghana's official language is English, making written documents and communication in interviews easily accessible for an English speaking researcher.

Research Design

This research was conducted through a comparative case study. A qualitative research design was chosen in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how NGO staffs view their roles in development, how they described and explained their own actions and interactions with others, the motivations behind these actions, and how they put these understandings into operation. In order to collect a wide range of qualitative data, a three pronged approach was taken to collect data for this research: 1) In-depth interviews with NGO staffs, donors, and community members; 2) Observations of NGO activities in the 'field' and at workshops; and 3) Analysis of NGO documents and literature. Due to the desire to gain information about how the NGO staffs view their roles in development, and in order to obtain information that was as much as possible free from the researcher's own biases and input, elite interviews were largely unscheduled. These interviews were guided by the general objectives of the research, but the

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[33] Robin Southerland, "Exploration History and Regional Geography," *Tullow Oil Report*, accessed on May 7th, 2012 at http://www.tullowoil.com/files/pdf/ghana/exploration-history-and-regional-geology.pdf
[34] Efam, "Ghana's Economy," 19.

particular information provided was left up to the interviewee in order to better assess their views

of their roles in development and the importance that different interviewees placed on these

various roles.

In order to control for the variety of opinions and approaches that may exist between

different types of NGOs that operate within the field of development, a variety of different types

of NGOs were chosen to participate in this research. The process of NGO categorization and

classification is described further in the following chapter.

Staff members were identified from these organizations to be interviewed based on their

ability to provide information necessary for the research. If the founder of the organization or

country director was available, they were sought out for their specific knowledge of the mission

and programmatic goals of the NGO. In seeking other staff members to gain information from,

'community mobilization officers' or equivalent staff members were sought due to their

knowledge of relationships between their NGO and communities at the 'grassroots,' and their

understanding and explanations of how the NGO was engaging with people and promoting

participation at the 'grassroots.' One donor organization was also contacted (CIDA). This donor

organization was able to give specific information on donor priorities and donor views of the

roles of NGOs in development, to contrast with and assess their compatibility with the various

NGOs' priorities and views. A variety of local elites and community members were also

interviewed to compare their views with the information provided by the NGO staffs.

NGO staff members, donors, and community members that were identified were

contacted by phone, e-mail, or in person to set up interviews. Snowball sampling was done to

acquire more participants once the research had begun, due to the difficulty in acquiring

interviews with NGOs and staff members from all of the specified categories.

Data collection was also done through observations throughout the research with all NGOs at their offices. Observations were conducted at an open one day forum with NGO representatives and community concerning the upcoming oil project in Ghana, while attending events in five different communities over a three day period with one NGO, and over a three day period spent in Tema with another NGO at a workshop attended by approximately forty-two community representatives. A day was also spent with community members in Teberebie (a small community in the Western Region). At each of these sites, observations were made and NGO literature and documents were collected to support the research. Interviews and informal discussions with community members and development actors were also conducted throughout.

Data Processing and Analysis

After all of the raw data was collected, the data was categorized into twenty-three separate categories[35] based on the content of the data (collected through interviews, observations, and documents). These categories were then combined based on theoretical links (when possible) to find 'umbrella' categories.[36] The literature was then reviewed to examine what was known about the concepts that were emerging in the data. This literature and the emerging concepts were then analyzed in relation to the NGOs' willingness and ability to gain access to people at the 'grassroots' and act as representatives for their interests at higher policy levels, and

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[35] These categories were: 1) Development approach; 2) Rationale for joining or forming the organization; 3) Focus areas; 4) Political standpoint; 5) Views on the role of NGOs; 6) Views on the role of the state in development; 7) Views on the roles of communities in development; 8) NGO relations with the state; 9) Choice of partners; 10) Views on advocacy functions; 11) Views on the causes of poverty; 12) Views on the organization being 'apolitical'; 13) Views on NGO partisanship; 14) Application of education and support; 15) Criticisms of the roles NGOs; 16) Views on constraints; 17) Evaluations (of selves, by donors, and of partners); 18) Application process for funding (through donors and by partners); 19) Internal organizational democracy; 20) Education/background of staff; 21) NGO office space; 22) Main source of funding; 23) Project-based or core funding.
[36] The 'umbrella categories' were: 1) Organizational mission, goals, and ideology; 2) Staff background; 3) Staff values and value consensus; 4) Work activities; 5) Input mechanisms; 6) Distance (physical and social); and 7) Constraints.

their engagement with people at the 'grassroots' to participate in development initiatives, as well as the effects of different constraints on the NGOs, such as donor control. Selective sampling of the data was then conducted to pull out core variables that seemed to be emerging to explain the relationships among the other variables in the data.[37] The core variables that came out of this process were 'donor effects' and 'organizational roots.' Lastly, conclusions were drawn based on the reviewed literature and the core variables that were identified in this research.

Methodological Limitations

There are a number of methodological limitations that affected this research. Gaining access to NGOs and their staff was a clear limitation that may have had an effect on the results of this research. Due to the difficulty in obtaining interviews with foreign development assistance associations, it was only possible to include one donor organization in this study (CIDA). Some NGOs that were contacted numerous times refused to grant interviews and consequently were not included in the study. Access and time constraints also affected the amount of staff that could be interviewed, as well as the amount of time that could be spent in the office and in the 'field' with the various NGOs that did participate. While this research would obviously have benefitted from a greater number of sources and more time observing each organization, the amount of data that was collected and the number of organizations that did participate provided enough data and covered enough variety of information for the purposes of this research. In any qualitative study, the researcher's personal gauge biases are inevitably a methodological limitation. While it is not possible to say that this research is completely free from the author's

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[37] 'Selected sampling' refers here to the process of collecting further data to identify the properties of the main variables, to determine whether the additional data 'fits' with the emerging hypotheses. In this case, CIDA was added to gain a better understanding of donor constraints, as well as additional staffs from each organization to try to acquire a clearer image of the role of organizational value consensus as a core variable, especially in its relationship to organizational roots.

personal biases, the method of interviews (unscheduled) allowed the participants freedom to express their opinions free from the researcher's biases or suggestions, and the use of a variety of sources of information serves to support the findings from the interviews.

Another restraint that affects the generalizability of this research is the inability due to time and resource constraints to conduct comparable research in another country or over time in Ghana. While this research clearly would have benefitted from either or both of these possibilities, it is my opinion that the research (although performed in one country at one point in time) can serve as a basis for more research in this area, and serves to build on and confirm some of the research and literature that already exists in this area.

The last major limitation that was observed in the conduct of this research was in assessing the validity of information that was provided in interviews. Questions that were asked were not always answered, or were not answered directly or necessarily honestly. While this is a problem that arises with any research with human subjects, the observations and documents collected, as well as interviews with different staffs from the same organizations as well as community members, served as a way to verify some of the information that was provided during interviews. The open-ended format of the interviews was also an important tool in this research, since I was able to ascertain what the participants viewed as important information at the outset of the interview, as well as what they chose to leave out of the discussion or avoided when asked later in the interview. This format also allowed me to examine whether the NGO mission or theory was reiterated strongly and consistently throughout the organization.

CHAPTER THREE: NGO CLASSIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION

In order to introduce the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that participated in this

research, it is necessary to explain the process of classification. The distinction between NGOs,

community-based organizations (CBOs), and social movements is generally very unclear.

Because of the difficulty in defining what constitutes an NGO, NGOs are often defined by what

they are 'not.[38]' They are, for example, 'not' governmental and 'not' profit making

organizations. Comparative analysis obviously requires a more functional definition of NGOs

than what they are 'not,' and a more 'positive' and generally accepted structural-operational

definition of NGOs has emerged that includes the following characteristics: They are private

organizations, not-for-profit or non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary.[39]

Although this definition is very broad, it provides a sufficient general framework without going

into the considerable volume of literature on 'what is an NGO' that is beyond the scope of this

research.[40] For simplicity purposes, it also makes sense to define NGOs by the laws that govern

their activities in specific countries. In this case, all of the NGOs interviewed have been legally

registered as such with the registrar general in Ghana. All of the NGOs included in this research

therefore consider themselves to be NGOs, and are legally registered and operating as such

according to Ghanaian law.

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[38] Samuel Nana Yaw Simpson, "Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Boards and Corporate Governance: The Ghanaian Experience," *Corporate Ownership & Control*, 6, no. 2 (Winter 2008), 90.

[39] Lester M. Salamon, S. Wojciech Sokolowki, and Regina List, "Global Civil Society: An Overview," *The John Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project* , (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, 2003), 11; Anna C. Vakil, "Confronting the Classification Problem: Towards a Taxonomy of NGOs," *World Development* 25, no. 12 (1997): 2060.

[40] See for example: J. Hailey, "Ladybirds, missionaries and NGOs," *Public Administration and Development, 19*, (1999): 467-485; Peter Willetts, "What is a Non-Governmental Organization?," *UNESCO Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems, Section 1: Institutional And Infrastructure Resource Issues*, Article 1.44.3.7, Non-Governmental Organizations; Michael Yaziji and Jonathan Doh, "Understanding NGOs" in *NGOs and Corporations: Conflict and Collaboration*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3-5.

The next difficulty in classifying the NGOs is in identifying how to categorize them within the NGO sector. NGOs are categorized in some studies according to their primary activities (e.g. the UN uses 12 categories, including but not limited to Health, Social Services, Development and Housing, Civic and Advocacy, and International).[41] All of the NGOs studied are engaged in 'development' work, and many NGOs engage in numerous activities, making this type of categorization somewhat ineffective for analysis. Another common categorization of NGOs seems to be between 'operational' (those that directly implement projects or services) and 'advocacy' NGOs.[42] Although this may have been an effective categorization in the past, today most NGOs operating in development are engaged in both operational and advocacy activities and this was my experience with the NGOs that participated in this research.

Michael Yaziji and Jonathan Doh use the advocacy/service (or operational) categorization, but include another separation into self-benefiting (e.g. member organizations such as cooperatives that pool interests) versus other-benefiting NGOs (e.g. organizations like CARE in which the capital and labour contributors are not members). They also further divide the advocacy category into 'watchdog' advocacy NGOs (which aim to ensure that the system requirements are being met rather than radically change the system), and 'social movement' advocacy NGOs which seek to radically change or undermine the current system.[43]

Lawrence Atingdui categorizes NGOs according to the classification system used by the department of social welfare in Ghana, in a study from 1995. According to this classification system, NGOs are separated into four categories: 1) Community organizations without external

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[41] Salamon, Sokolowki, and List, "Global Civil Society," 11.
[42] Willetts, "What is a Non-Governmental Organization?," 9.
[43] Yaziji and Doh, "Understanding NGOs," 5-10.

affiliation; 2) National organizations without external affiliations; 3) National affiliates of international organizations with indigenous leadership; and 4) International organizations operating locally.[44] While this system is logical since it is based on Ghanaian government categorization, it lacks depth and is somewhat general for comparative research purposes.

Rather than categorizing NGOs by type, Felix Edoho categorizes NGOs into 'developmental stages.' He argues that NGOs in Africa have evolved through three distinguishable stages of development: 1) Commitment to relief and welfare activities; 2) Small-scale local development activities; and 3) Community organization, mobilization, and coalition-building.[45] Edoho explains that these 'third generation' (or third stage) NGOs are attempting to overcome dependence on donor controlled agendas and focus instead on building consciousness and mobilization.[46]

David C. Korten looks at the differences between different types of NGOs in his 1990 book, *Getting to the 21st Century*. In one section of this book he argues for a differentiation between 'Public Service Contractor' NGOs (PSCs) and Voluntary Organization NGOs (VOs). The main difference in his analysis between these two types of NGOs is between their differing orientations. PSCs, according to Korten, are 'market driven' NGOs, whereas VOs are 'value driven' NGOs. Under this classification, 'market driven' NGOs are driven by market considerations (e.g. the ability to continue to procure funding), and are less likely to engage in advocacy on controversial issues than VOs because of the potential consequences with

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[44] Lawrence Atingdui, "Defining the Non-Profit Sector: Ghana," *Working Papers of the John Hopkins Non-Profit Sector Project*, no.14 (1995): 4.
[45] Felix Moses Edoho, "Strategic Repositioning of NGOs for Sustainable Development in Africa," In Robert A. Dibie (ed), *Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa,* New York: Lexington Books (2008): 208.
[46] Ibid, 208.

prospective donors or the risks of upsetting relationships with host governments. The more an

NGOs' choices are conditioned by donor priorities and availability of funds rather than its own

social mission, the more an NGO is considered 'market driven' rather than 'value driven' under

Korten's classification. Korten also argues that there is pressure for VOs to become PSCs in

order to acquire more funding, provide job security to paid staffs, and because of the difficulty in

maintaining a values consensus within a growing organization. He contends however that NGOs

with clearer visions of their organizational mission and nature are better able to resist this

pressure.[47]

In a 1997 paper for World Development, Anna C. Vakil conducts a comprehensive analysis

of the literature on NGO categorization over a period of ten years. She analyzes eight different

classification systems used by different authors over the years. These systems focus on

categories based on orientation (e.g. welfare, developmental, or empowerment), level of

operation (e.g. local, national, and international), primary economic activity (the economic sector

in which the organizations are active), client groups (e.g. first party member organizations versus

second party service organizations), evolutionary categories, and multi-dimensional

categorizations. Although each of these categorizations has benefits and drawbacks, the multi-

dimensional categorizations are the most useful for analysis since one-dimensional approaches

tend to ignore changes that occur in organizations over time.[48] The more evaluative

classification frameworks (e.g. with focuses on level of accountability, control over resources,

values, type of leadership, and participation) offer a more comprehensive categorization that

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[47] David C. Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1990): 102- 105.
[48] Vakil, "Confronting the Classification Problem," 2057-2062.

seems useful for research, yet allows for so much subjectivity in categorization that replication would be extremely difficult.[49]

Vakil also discusses the importance of organizational structure in classifying NGOs, as well as the distinction between organizations that began along traditional lines and those that began along Western lines. Along these lines, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) created a typology of women's organizations based on 'organizational types.' These types include 'outside initiated' organizations, 'small grassroots' organizations, 'political party affiliated' organizations, 'research based' organizations, and 'worker based' organizations.[50]

The DAWN classification system seems to be the most useful for comparative purposes for this research because organizational types or roots seem to play a strong role in how the different NGOs in this research are able to access and promote participation at the grassroots. This research will therefore draw on the DAWN classification system to create three categories of NGOs, based on their organizational roots. These are: 1) 'International/ Elite initiated' NGOs (NGOs that were either initiated internationally and/or initiated by domestic elites); 2) NGOs with Political Party roots (NGOs that are either affiliated to a political party or have roots in a political party); and 3) Grassroots-initiated NGOs (NGOs that were initiated by people at the grassroots, or more as 'social movement'-type organizations—this follows from DAWN's 'small grassroots' category, but addresses the possibility for change in organizational size over time).

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[49] See for example Vakil's discussion of Fowler's classification system based on accountability (and the necessity for 'downward accountability') and resource control characteristics (based on how far decision-making is compromised by external funding).

[50] Gita Sen and Caren Grown, *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's' Perspectives*, (Earthscan: London, 1987).

The Participating NGOs: 'DAWN' Categorization

Eight NGOs were chosen to participate in the research: 1) The Canadian Parliamentary Centre (CPC); 2) Sport for Development Organization (SDO); 3) The Centre for Democratic Development (CDD); 4) ActionAid Ghana (AAG); 5) Wacam; 6) The 31st December Women's Movement (DWM); 7) Human Rights Advocacy Organization (HRAO); and 8) CARE international (CARE). One donor project was also chosen to participate (The Rights and Voices Initiative- RAVI) which received funding through two of the participant NGOs (AAI and CDD), and provided funding to one of the participant NGOs (Wacam). One donor organization also participated in the research (CIDA), which directly funded five of the participant NGOs (SDO, CHRI, CDD, CPC, and CARE) and indirectly funded one other participant NGO (Wacam through the RAVI project) (See Figure 1.1 below for an illustration of the funding arrangements).

International/Elite Initiated NGOs: CDD, AAG, CARE, CPC, HRAO, and SDO

Due to their international status and control, AAG, CARE, HRAO, CPC, and SDO are considered 'outside-initiated' NGOs for the purposes of this research. Although the CDD is a domestic NGO, it was included in this category due to its elite roots. Before founding the CDD, Dr. Gyimah-Boadi studied in the United States, completed his PhD, and worked as a consultant for the World Bank. He currently acts as head of the Afrobarometer project in Ghana. The CDD has elite roots stemming from the leader's elite status, and will be considered as an NGO with elite roots for the purposes of this research.

Grassroots-Initiated NGO: Wacam

Wacam began with the goal of being a social movement rather than an NGO. The founders were working in the ministry of agriculture and noticed that the mining companies were

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encroaching on the farms, and people were worried. They pulled the people together and began

a project to get community concerns published, but eventually decided along with the

communities that they should start WACAM.[51] Due to its foundation within the communities

that it serves, Wacam is classified as a 'grassroots-initiated' NGO for the purposes of this

research.

NGO with Political Party Roots: DWM

The DWM was formed in May of 1982, by Nana Agyeman Rawlings, the wife of Flt. Lt.

Jerry Rawlings, who at the time was the Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council

(PNDC) and later the elected President of Ghana from 1993 to 2001.[52] Early on, the DWM was

involved directly in political activities (such as publicising the PNDC government's educational

and political reforms, and endorsing the government's 1987 budget) in addition to social and

economic activities (such as setting up daycares, and organizing education campaigns on health,

nutrition, and family planning). The organization had also created international links with

women's organizations in Cuba and the Soviet Union.[53] With the transition to democracy in

Ghana in 1992, the DWM began to describe itself as an NGO "that the revolution gave birth

to.[54]" Due to these roots, DWM is classified as an NGO 'with political party roots' for the

purposes of this research.

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[51] Hannah Owusu-Korentang, Interview by the author, Tema, Ghana, November 30, 2009.

[52] Donald I. Ray, *Ghana: Politics, Economics and Society*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc (1986): 96

[53] Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame A. Ninsin (eds), *The State, Development and Politics in Ghana*, Dakar: CODESRIA, (1989): 85- 87

[54] Karl Botchway, "The Politics and Apolitics of Development: The Case of a Development Project in Northern Ghana," In Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang and Kwamina Panford (eds), *Africa's Development in the Twenty-first Century: Pertinent Socio-Economic and Development Issues*, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd (2006): 328

NGO Funding Arrangements

Major Donors   **NGOs**   **NGO-offshoot Projects**

SDO

CIDA

HRAO

CDD

USAID

CPC

DFID

RAVI

AAG

International
Civil Society

CARE

International
Corporate

DWM

Wacam

Local

Oxfam America
(not included in
study)
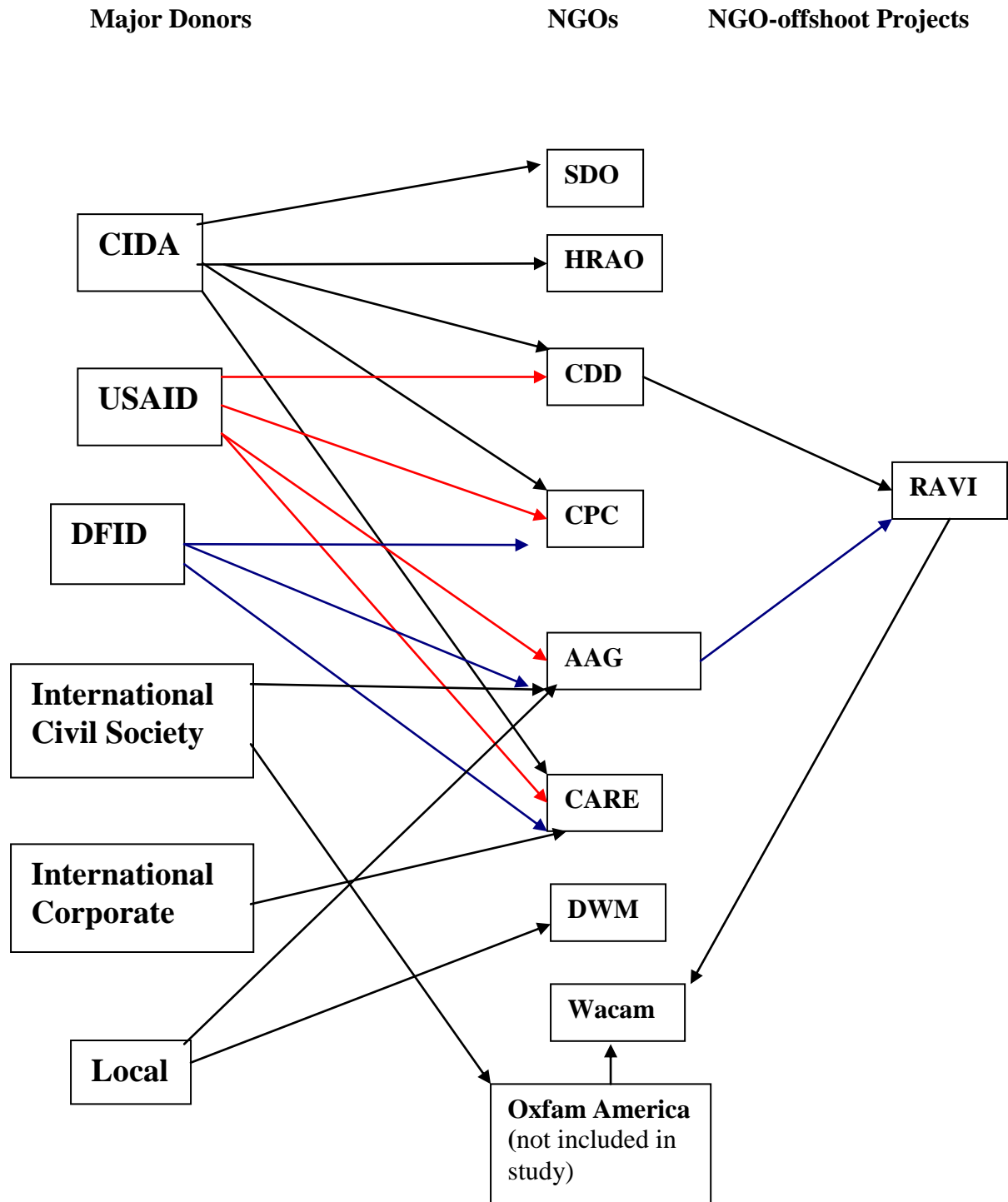
Figure 1.1: Funding Arrangements

CHAPTER FOUR: LITERATURE REVIEW: NGOS AND EFFECTIVE

PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Within the large body of literature pertaining to NGO work in development, there is a very

wide range of theoretical and educational backgrounds and ideological perspectives. This body

of literature lacks a 'core' group of literature/research. The diverse theoretical and ideological

backgrounds and variations in fields of authors on this subject[55] create a body of literature with a

very wide variety of views on NGOs' roles and effectiveness within the current development

model.

Within this wide variety of opinions on the effectiveness of NGOs in different development

roles, there does seem to be somewhat of a consensus on NGOs' roles in development. Although

one author may support certain types of NGOs as effective service delivery organization (e.g.

Kothari) and another may be critical of any NGO involvement in development (e.g. Veltmeyer),

most agree that NGOs are attempting to fulfill the same role: Being a link to the grassroots,

advocating for people at the grassroots, and promoting grassroots participation in development

initiatives.

Advocacy and the 'Voice of the Voiceless'

In recent years, there has been a transition from only certain specialized NGOs engaging in

advocacy work and others acting as service delivery organizations, to most NGOs engaging in

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[55] See for example Shivji (Pan-African and world systems theorist with a background in law), Van Rooy
(background in international relations), Eade (background in English, consultant to regional organizations in
development), Hearn (labour activist with a background in political science), Veltmeyer (proclaimed 'anti-
imperialist' with a background in linguistics, political science, and sociology) and Boafo-Arthur (research focus on
electoral democracy, with a background in political science).

some form of advocacy alongside service delivery.[56] Some authors argue that NGOs have started to play an important role in advocating for the poor and marginalized due to their capacity to give voice to the excluded.[57]

Many authors agree that NGOs play key roles in advocating for marginalized groups in 'developing' countries, since organized action by citizens to put pressure on government is rare and NGO advocacy groups can provide the necessary means to lobby the government for the good of the people.[58] In Ghana for example, in the case of environmental degradation caused by mining companies, the Third World Network (TWN) and other environmental NGOs fought the government as representatives of the local people affected by mining activities.[59] According to Harsh Sethi, civil society organizations in the developing world—whether foreign or domestic development groups, charities, 'consciousness-raising' groups, or protest groups—are able to engage in issues that the communities identify as crucial and act as the 'locus of action' for actors seeking change and the space for possible revolution, but only if they engage in theory creation.[60] In this view, NGOs can promote positive civil society participation for change.[61]

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[56] For example: Alan Hudson, "Making the connection: Legitimacy claims, legitimacy chains and Northern NGOs' International Advocacy", in ed. D. Lewis and T. Wallace, *After the 'new policy agenda'? Non-governmental organisations and the search for development alternatives.* (Kumarian Press, 2000): 2

[57] Miloon Kothari, ed., *Development and Social Action: Selected Essays from Development in Practice*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 1999): 18-19; Paul Nelson, "NGOs in the Foreign Aid System," in ed. Louis A. Picard, Robert Groelsema, and Terry F. Buss, *Foreign Aid and Foreign Policy: Lessons for the Next Half-Century*, (New York: M.E. Sharp, Inc, 2007): 315-316; Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*, 73, 91.

[58] Ninsin, "Markets," 100.

[59] Ibid, 93.

[60] Sethi and others (see for example Veltmeyer and Petras, Bob, and Shivji) condemn the lack of 'theory building' that accompanies social action through NGOs. These authors argue that the necessity for 'quick successes' creates an atmosphere where NGOs (and other movements for change) lack the time and capacity to formulate coherent political theories to back their demands, and plans that might lead to more sustainable or systemic change.

[61] Harsh Sethi, "Action Groups in the New Politics," in ed. Ponna Wignaraja, *New Social Movements in the South empowering the People*, (London: Zed Books, 1993): 239- 253. Sethi's research focuses on civil society groups in India, and he argues that although CS groups may be more able to access the will of the people at the grassroots than

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According to another perspective, NGOs are adaptable organizations, able to work effectively to implement development initiatives at the 'grassroots.' Unlike the 'urban-rural' approach to public policy implementation taken by government, NGOs are generally less bureaucratic in structure and prefer to use 'grassroots strategies' in executing development projects in Africa. They "adapt to changing environmental conditions and manage changes effectively, constantly transitioning to new strategies, turning as necessary in new directions to achieve their goals or missions of human development.[62]"

Giles Mohan explains that the World Bank sees various benefits from supporting civil society organizations such as NGOs[63] in development work: They provide an aggregation of the voices of the people; they provide technical expertise; they help build local civil society organizations; and they deliver necessary services.[64] Donor agencies and western industrialized nations also often prefer to channel aid through international NGOs due to a lack of trust in national and regional governments because of the perception that there are high levels of corruption in many governments.[65]

NGOs have increasingly worked with grassroots and community based organizations in Africa. In his examination of two NGO projects in Zambia, Christopher Collier concludes that NGOs often work closely with people at the grassroots and engage with local communities and

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political parties, there are clear problems with the way the 'grassroots' or 'marginalized' peoples are grouped together in a loose category that ignores class analysis.

[62] Dibie, *NGOs and Sustainable Development*, 2.

[63] It is important to note that these donors view NGOs as civil society groups, implying that they are necessarily a part of civil society when in many cases NGOs may be quite separate from domestic or grassroots civil society in the geographic areas within which they work.

[64] Giles Mohan, "The Disappointments of Civil Society: The Politics of NGO Intervention in Northern Ghana," *Political Geography* 21 (2002): 129. In this article Mohan studied the work of the NGO 'Village Aid' in Northern Ghana.

[65] Dibie, *NGOs and Sustainable Development*, 2.

organizations. Despite this positive view however, he criticizes some NGOs for undermining the

activities of community organizations. He concludes that NGOs have the ability to play a

necessary role in development by working closely with those at the 'grassroots.' However, they

do not often have the time or resources necessary (often due to donor demands for reports and

concrete accomplishments) to assess all aspects of a situation in a country before getting

involved, in order to make sure that local initiatives are not undermined or 'undercut.[66]'

Putting Representation into Practise: NGOs as Effective Grassroots Representatives

If NGOs are acting as 'voices of the voiceless' it is important to look at how they are able

to gain access to and act as representatives for people at the 'grassroots' level. Representation

and participation have important links within a political framework. Legitimate representation is

an important part of political participation when direct participation is unfeasible.[67] The concept

of representation is often neglected in NGO literature, even when NGOs are considered to be

acting as the 'voice' of the people at the grassroots level. This section will focus on the uses of

the concept of representation in the literature.

Many different authors have approached the concept of representation, especially in its

relation to democratic governance. For the purposes of this research, I will focus on the concept

of representation as presented by Jane Mansbridge in *Beyond Adversarial Democracy* and by

Hanna Pitkin in her very thorough work, *The Concept of Representation*.[68]

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[66] Christopher Collier, "NGOs, the Poor, and Local Government" in ed. Jenny Pearce, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: Selected Essays from Development in Practice*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000): 117

[67] John Gaventa, "Towards participatory governance," 29.

[68] For brevity purposes, it was only possible to look at a few authors. The choice to focus on these two authors was made for the following reasons: Pitkin's analysis proved very useful in this case because she provides a very good overview of many different theorists and their perspectives on representation within her work. Both Pitkin and Mansbridge's final analyses of representation were found to be quite salient to my case study and analysis of NGOs' roles as representatives in Ghana, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

Jane Mansbridge approaches the concept of representation from the perspective that democratic representation is a less desirable form of democracy than participatory democracy. She explains that representative democracy is always adversarial rather than unitary. Elections or votes are inherently adversarial because they indicate the failure of the belief that there is a correct solution to a given political problem that can be made in the common interest. Accordingly, individual self-interest rather than the common good is the foundation for adversarial democratic theory, which favours self-protection over finding solutions based on equal status.[69] Mansbridge goes as far as to claim that representation restricts freedom. She quotes Rousseau and explains that the moment a people are represented they are no longer free to act as they wish; therefore, sovereignty does not correspond with representation.[70]

In contrast to representative or adversarial democracy, Mansbridge presents her case for unitary democracy. She claims that unitary democracy requires all participants to have a common interest on all matters requiring collective decision-making, as well as equal respect of all members to preserve the bonds of friendship, which draw the group together.[71] This view of the necessity for 'bonds of friendship' and 'common interests' for true democratic decision-making has clear implications for NGOs promoting participatory decision-making, that will be discussed further in the following chapters.

For Mansbridge, representation and participation are linked. Representation means a decline in participation for the majority of the population. Representation also leads to conflicting interests between representatives and constituents, because the representatives are

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[69] Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1980): 8-13, 15-17.
[70] Mansbridge, *Democracy*, 18. Rousseau is implying here that once a person is 'represented' they lose the ability they may have had to make choices in all matters—sovereignty is therefore sacrificed to gain time, simplicity, convenience.
[71] Ibid, 24-29.

cut-off from daily interaction with constituents and end up in daily contact with other legislators, inevitably developing different interests than constituents. Accordingly, representatives may establish closer bonds with other legislators over their constituents, as well as a greater stake in maintaining the system that has given them power, and maintaining their position within that system.[72] Mansbridge therefore sees representation as conflicting with participatory models of democracy, since participatory democracy requires common interests and equality of respect within decision-making processes.

Hanna Pitkin takes a more in-depth look at the concept of representation and sees it as a highly complex concept that can engage people differently depending on the context within which it is used and how it is viewed. Pitkin begins by investigating how several different political theorists have approached the concept of representation. Thomas Hobbes (according to Pitkin) looks at representation in its formal aspects and takes an 'authorization view' of representation. In this view, representation is seen in terms of 'giving' and 'having' authority by the represented and the representative respectively. A representative is someone who has been authorized to act on behalf of the represented, and the represented is responsible for the consequences of these actions as if he/she has done them him/herself. Within this view, it is not possible to represent someone 'badly' or 'well,' you simply represent someone or you do not.[73]

After her analysis of the different political theorists' views on representation, Pitkin takes an in-depth look at different types of representation. She describes two different types of representation as 'standing for' a person or a group. 'Standing for' as descriptive representation means being 'like' the person or group that the representative is standing for, rather than

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[72] Mansbridge, *Democracy*, 235-243.
[73] Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967): 38-39.

necessarily acting like them. Representative government in this sense would be an accurate

reflection of the various interests in society, based on the representative's characteristics.[74]

Representation can also mean 'acting for' in Pitkin's analysis. In order for the

representative to be able to 'act for' the represented, there must be ties between the two. There

are two types of 'acting for' representation: 1) Acting for as trusteeship; and 2) Acting for as

substitution.[75] In the case of 'acting for' as trusteeship, the representative acts in the best interest

of the represented. In government, this means that the representative must have knowledge and

insight into the best interests of the people, and be given free reign to exercise his/her superior

wisdom or skill to the best interest of the people. In the case of 'acting for' as substitution, the

representative is a replacement for the people that acts as the represented would act if they were

present.[76]

Other authors have also approached representation in a similar manner. Monica Brito

Vieira and David Runciman categorize representatives as 'self-selected' (defending the best

interest of the represented, similarly to Pitkin's 'trusteeship' representatives) and 'functional'

representatives (classified as such when they are acting in place of the people at a given time,

similar to Pitkin's 'substitutive' representation).[77]

The conflict between 'acting for' as a trusteeship and 'acting for' as substitution leads to

a debate between mandate and independence. The question then becomes: Should a

representative act in accordance with the wishes of his/her 'constituents' and be bound by the

mandate from them, or should a representative be free to act as he/she deems in the best interest

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[74] Pitkin, *Representation*, 60-61.
[75] Ibid, 112, 127.
[76] Ibid, 130-136.
[77] Vieira and Runciman, Representation, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008): 103-107.

of the constituents?[78] This problem demonstrates how there can be two main types of interests to represent—unattached interests (e.g. national welfare) or personal interests (e.g. specific interests of groups or communities).[79]

For proponents of unattached interests or representation as trusteeship, representation means enactment of the national good by a select elite. From this perspective, it does not make sense for the elite to take council with the people who have far less knowledge and capacity to understand the greater good, or as Burke explains: for "wise superior men to take council with stupid, inferior ones.[80]" Pitkin explains that the more a theorist sees the representative as a member of a superior elite of wisdom and reason, the less it makes sense for them to consult the represented. Correspondingly, the more a theorist sees political issues as cut-and-dry questions of knowledge to which correct, objectively valid answers are possible, the more likely they are to view a representative as an 'expert' and the views of the people as irrelevant. Conversely, the more a theorist sees the represented as an ordinary person drawn from the constituency, and political issues as arbitrary choices, the less it makes sense for the representative to make decisions without consultations with the people.[81]

On the other hand, for proponents of a personal interest or 'representation as substitution' perspective, representatives are chosen as a substitute for direct democracy when it is unfeasible. From this perspective representatives are not a 'wise and superior' elite who will act for the welfare of the people, but rather a mini portrait of the interest of the people. The interests of the representatives in this case should be in proportion to the interests of the communities that they

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[78] Pitkin, *Representation*, 145.
[79] Ibid, 161.
[80] Ibid, 170.
[81] Ibid, 211-212.

represent. The best way to do this is to make the representatives part of the public that they serve, and have short terms of governance so that the representatives must return to their communities and live under the laws and policies that they have created.[82]

After assessing the different theorists' perspectives and different types of representation, Pitkin chooses to take a position on representation that rests between the two main perspectives. She argues that a representative must act in the best interest of the represented, in a way that is responsive to them.[83] Pitkin concludes that a 'good' representative has some sense to act independently for the welfare of the people, but also does not persistently do so against the wishes of the people. Pitkin's analysis of representation will be useful for the following analysis of NGOs acting as representatives for communities in development,[84] but her analysis of other theorists also provides a useful framework from which to analyze different perspectives on representation in development.

NGOs are increasingly acting as representatives and 'guardians' of the interests of those at the community or 'grassroots' level and theoretically providing mechanisms through which citizens can articulate their interests and hold governments accountable.[85] It can be argued however that NGOs, deprived of the authority bestowed by the represented through elections, membership, or influence on decision-making, are neither representative of nor accountable to the communities they claim to represent.[86]

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[82] Pitkin, *Representation*, 191, 200-201.
[83] Ibid, 209.
[84] This research will refer specifically to Pitkin's explanation of the necessity for responsiveness in representation, and the difference between 'trustee'-type and 'substitute'- type representatives.
[85] Vieira and Runciman, *Representation*, 86-87, 160-162; and Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*, 99.
[86] Vieira and Runciman, *Representation*, 154, 162.

Different types of NGOs however, may act differently as representatives.[87] Member-based NGOs are more likely to resemble Pitkin's substitution-type representatives, or approach Mansbridge's participatory democracy, since membership-based organizations are more likely to draw representatives from members who share common interests and bonds of friendship with the represented. NGOs without direct membership on the other hand, are more likely to resemble a corporate model of representation—with different financiers, a board of directors, and employees that may be serving the interests of the NGO itself in dealings with third parties such as the United Nations, other NGOs, and governments.[88] Representation often thus becomes simply the interaction of the leaders of organizations rather than the interaction of the interests of members.[89] Although representation can be a key element towards empowerment, it is important to look at who is being empowered through representation, because it may only be 'empowerment' of a select elite depending on the interests being represented. In this case, the 'globally disempowered' are often left with no real representation, and no opportunities to express their views on how they are being represented.[90]

For the purposes of this research, effective representation will, following Pitkin's analysis, refer to acting as both 'trustee-type' and 'substitutive-type' representatives—acting in the best interest of the represented, but in a way that is responsive to them. Ideally, these representatives would be drawn from the communities that they serve so that they share genuine

[87] Vieira and Runciman, *Representation*, 158-159.
[88] Ibid, 158-159.
[89] Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, Hickey, "Towards Participation as transformation: critical themes and challenges," in ed. Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?* (New York: Zed Books*,* 2004): 19.
[90] John Gaventa, "Towards participatory governance: assessing the transformative possibilities," in ed. Hickey and Mohan, *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?"* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2004): 32; Vieira and Runciman, *Representation*, 167.

common interests with the people that they are representing and have adequate access to grassroots opinions so that many decisions can be made in consultation with the people.

Putting Participation into Practise: What is 'Effective' Participation in Development?

The concept of participation has become part of the dominant development paradigm and is applied throughout the development literature as well as in practise in development. However, this concept is used to refer to a very wide variety of approaches and practises. If NGOs are perceived as increasing grassroots participation, it is important to assess how they are getting people at the grassroots to participate in development, and who is included in the 'grassroots.'. If they are unable to increase participation by people at the grassroots, what is constraining them (assuming that this is their goal)? The following section will look at different types of participation and how they have been presented in the literature.

Participation and participatory development can have different definitions depending on the type of participation being defined, as well as the position, goals, and interests of those defining it.[91] Participation has become a widely used term in development discourse over the last twenty years[92] therefore it is necessary to analyze the different uses of the term and the implications of these different uses. Although neoliberals and radical activists may use similar language, their visions of what these terms mean are very different. Terms such as

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[91] Even participation by NGOs themselves within the official structures can be problematic. One study from the Philippines found that although NGOs in certain areas were mandated full participation in statutory committees at the various levels of governance, it was impossible to include all legitimate civil society actors and there was little public knowledge of the new arrangement even within the NGO community itself. (From Harry Blair, "Innovations in Participatory Local Governance," in *United Nations, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Participatory governance and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): publication based on the Expert Group Meetings on Engaged Governance: Citizen Participation in the Implementation of the Development Goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 10-2 November 2006, New York*, (New York: United Nations): 86-88.) This suggests that even when NGOs are included, it does not mean that all NGOs will be included.

[92] John Gaventa, "Towards participatory governance," 25.

'empowerment,' 'participation,' 'local,' 'community,' and even 'NGO' are widespread in current

development literature, but these terms have very different meanings for the World Bank (WB)

than for radical activists. In neo-liberal discourse for example, 'empowerment' is something that

can be implemented without addressing fundamental relationships of equity and power.[93]

A working definition of popular participation from the United Nations Research Institute for

Social Development (UNRISD) as outlined by Pearse and Stiefel in 1979 explains that: popular

participation means "organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative

institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups or movements of those hitherto

excluded from social control.[94]" I introduce this past definition of participation to contrast it

with contemporary views on participation in development. Contemporary conventional

definitions of participation have often been detached from the radical political associations of

older definitions. A more recent UN publication for example, defines participation as "a process

of equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development

policies and strategies and in the analysis, planning and implementation, monitoring and

evaluation of development activities.[95]"

      Mohan and Hickey take a social transformation approach to development, arguing that

there seems to have been a de-politicization of participation that has rendered it a 'technical fix'

rather than an organized emancipatory effort. They complain of the lack of theorization in the

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[93] Janet G. Townsend, Gina Porter and Emma Mawdsley, "Creating Spaces of Resistance: Development NGOs and their Clients in Ghana, India and Mexico," *Antipode*, (2004): 874

[94] As cited in Jessica M. Vivian, "Foundations for Sustainable Development: Participation, Empowerment and Local Resource Management" in *Grassroots Environmental Action: People's Participation in Sustainable Development*, ed. Dharam Ghai and Jessica M. Vivian, (New York: Routledge, 1992): 54, from Andrew Pearse and Matthias Stiefel (Geneva: UNRISD, 1979): 8.

[95] Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, "Participation: Our Vision @ Participation," *FAO*, (2007), accessed May 15, 2012 at:
http://www.fao.org/Participation/english_web_new/content_en/definition.html

mainstream development literature of the potential contribution of participation to a transformatory political process.[96]

Mohan and Hickey (as well as the UNRISD working definition used in Pearse and Stiefel's 1979 paper) take a somewhat Freirean approach to participation. Paulo Freire advocated for a type of participation that meant a radical empowerment of the people. In his view, individual and class action are necessary to transform the structures of subordination that exclude people from the decision-making process. Participation in relation to development, in this sense, means working with the poor to help them to actively struggle for change.[97] Jessica M. Vivian argues that true popular participation is necessarily a confrontational process because the development goals of the elite generally preclude increased involvement of the poor. Her view of true popular participation needs to go beyond the initiation of projects from the outside, and involves formulating plans and decision-making at the local level. Participation from this perspective is not something that can be 'passed down' from the elite to the public. Popular participation that involves meaningful and sustainable change in the way people are able to contribute to decision-making processes is necessarily a confrontational process that people at the grassroots must struggle for from below.[98]

Since participation became part of the dominant development paradigm as a key to the long-term sustainability of development initiatives, there has been a tendency to put a wide

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[96] Giles Mohan and Samuel Hickey, "Relocating participation within a radical politics of development: critical modernism and citizenship." in ed. Hickey and Mohan, *Participation,* (2004): 59.

[97] Frances Cleaver, "Institutions, Agency and the Limitations of Participatory Approaches to Development," in ed. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2001): 37.

[98] Jessica M. Vivian, "Foundations for Sustainable Development: Participation, Empowerment and Local Resource Management" in ed. Dharam Ghai and Jessica M. Vivian, *Grassroots Environmental Action: People's Participation in Sustainable Development,* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 53.

variety of activities under the banner of 'participation.[99]' However, different theorists tend to

have very different views on what constitutes participation, or what 'true' or 'ideal' participatory

development should entail. Another recent UN definition from a 2006 conference for example,

outlines effective participation as that in which "all relevant stakeholders take part in the

decision-making process and are able to influence decisions so that at the end of the process all

parties feel that their views and interests have been given due consideration.[100]"

The authors of the UN definition argue however, that 'deep' and broad participation

continues to be the exception rather than the rule. Successful participatory governance is usually

underpinned by years of social mobilization, giving power to weaker segments of society

through the knowledge of being backed by a larger social force.[101] Recent WB literature also

acknowledges some of the problems associated with top-down implementation of participation in

development initiatives, such as demands for plans and reports in English, and lack of

accountability to citizens. To address these problems they propose a move to 'Local and

Community Driven Development (LCDD).' The core expectations of LCDD include a

definition of 'real participation' in development: Empowering communities by giving them

authority to make decisions and assigning them revenues and fiscal resources, reaching all

stakeholders, involving citizens at every stage and level of the development process, and insuring

that decisions are taken with full information and full representation of all interests.[102]

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[99] Paul Francis, "Participatory Development at the World Bank: The Primacy of Process," in ed. Cooke and Kothari, *Participation*, (2001): 72, 87.

[100] United Nations, *Introduction to United Nations Participatory Governance and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*, (2008): 2.

[101] Ibid, 2, 6, 35.

[102] Hans Binswanger-Mkhize, et al, "Historical Roots and Evolution of Community Driven Development," In *Local and Community Driven Development*, (2010): 6, 181, 211-212.

Other case studies have found that the success of participation in governance depends on the degree of decentralization that has occurred, because decentralization allows ordinary citizens to have a greater influence on decisions.[103] Along these same lines, strengthening participatory frameworks in practise requires the institution of organizational arrangements based on participatory principles, including clear roles for civil society and opportunities for systematic input.[104]

Other authors take a more subjective approach to implementing participatory principles. Pritha Gopalan, for example, argues that rather than looking at the institutional arrangement to determine whether effective participation is occurring, it is necessary to analyze each specific instance of participation. She argues that the participatory process is rooted in a mutuality of teaching and learning between actors and communities. For 'deeper' participation to occur, each side must participate in the others' practices and undergo adjustments that involve both teaching and learning.[105] When more 'top down' approaches to participation such as information sharing and consultation are included as participation, participation is being approached simply as a process that can be 'applied' to development.[106] According to this view participatory development is a reversal of hierarchies that includes the incorporation of local knowledge into development program planning.[107]

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[103] Harry Blair, "Innovations in Participatory Local Governance", in *United Nations Participatory Governance*,(2008): 103; Mansbridge, *Democracy*, 279.

[104] Diane M. Guthrie, "Strengthening the Principles of Participation in Practicefor the Acheivement of the Millennium Development Goals," in *United Nations Participatory Governance*, (2008): 180.

[105] Pritha Gopalan, "The Trust Factor in Participation and Social Education", *Annals, American Association of Political and Social Science* 554 (November 1997): 179.

[106] Francis, "Participatory Development at the World Bank," (2001): 72, 87.

[107] Uma Kothari, "Power, Knowledge and Social Control in Participatory Development," in *Participation*, (2001), 140-141; David Mosse, "People's Knowledge,' Participation and Pastronage: Operations and Representation in Rural Development," in *Participation*, (2001): 16. Donald I. Ray and Sherri Brown, "Building HIV/AIDS

NGOs may take different approaches to participation depending on the organization's goals of popular participation in development. Participatory goals include greater efficiency, lower costs for projects, greater effectiveness in results, community solidarity, increased decision-making capacity, or changes in the distribution of power or social or economic benefits.[108]

Participatory goals are difficult to judge or monitor, therefore it may be more useful to look at the types of participatory approaches available to actors. Different types of participatory development approaches that are outlined in the literature include: 1) Information gathering and sharing (including research and analysis, sharing information with citizens and civic groups, and soliciting views through surveys, polling, and public meetings and forums); 2) Systematic consultations with affected constituencies (including citizen monitoring programs, public hearings, task forces, and advisory councils); and 3) Decision-making structures where the authority over final resolutions rests with the participants (for example in problem-solving workshops).[109]

Other approaches to classifying participation look more closely at different types of 'participatory spaces' to analyze what is possible within them, who can enter, and what interests shape the boundaries of these spaces. John Gaventa classifies participatory spaces into closed

Competence in Ghana—Traditional Leadership and Shared Legitimacy: A Grassroots Community Intervention Best Practices Model," in (eds) Ray, Donald I, et al, *Reiventing African Chieftaincy in the Age of AIDS, Gender, Governance, and Development*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011): 89-120. Ray and Brown investigate the importance of local knowledge in development planning through a study of the roles of traditional leaders in building AIDS competence in the Manya Krobo traditional area of Ghana.
[108] Paul Streeten, "NGOs and Development", *Annals, American Association of Political and Social Science* 554 (November 1997): 200-201.
[109] Timothy P. Sisk, ed., *Democracy at the Local Level: The International IDEA Handbook on Participation, Representation, Conflict Management and Governance*, (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001): 154-156.

(spaces that are not accessible to popular participation), invited (space in which certain members of the public can be invited to participate for a given amount of time), or claimed spaces (spaces that the public appropriates or struggles for—also called 'popular' spaces by Andrea Cornwall).[110] When analyzing the type of participation that NGOs are promoting, it is important to look at what types of 'participatory approaches' they are using, as well as what types of 'spaces' participation is occurring within. According to one study for example, DFID tends to promote participatory development, but only within 'invited' political spaces.[111]

Another approach to participation that is useful for this research is the 'rights-based approach' to participatory development. Rights-based approaches view participation as linked to human rights as rights of citizenship, not as invitations that can be offered 'from above' to beneficiaries of development.[112] Rights-based approaches (RBAs) therefore attempt to attach political rights and responsibilities to participation, and engage citizens within a wider project of transformation. Some authors argue that RBAs are a method of re-politicizing development because they offer people a legitimate claim or entitlement to participation.[113] In some ways, RBAs seem to return to the more Freirean approach to participation, since they argue that participation is a right that should be claimed, or struggled for. On the other hand, it can be argued that by basing itself in the 'neutral' language of human rights, an RBA de-politicizes the popular struggle for participation in development.

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[110] Gaventa, "Towards participatory governance," (2004): 34-35; Cornwall, "Historical Perspectives on Participation," (2004): 80-81.

[111] Jeremy Holland, Mary Ann Brocklesby, and Charles Abugre, "Beyond the technical fix? Participation in donor approaches to rights-based development," in *Participation*, (2004): 261.

[112] Michael Redclift, "Sustainable Development and Popular Participation: A Framework for Analysis", in *Grassroots Environmental Action*, (1992): 38. The RBA is promoted by AAI, AAG, the RAVI project, and Wacam through RAVI.

[113] Hickey and Mohan, "Relocating participation" in Participation, (2004): 163-165; and Holland, Brocklesby, and Abugre, "Beyond the technical fix?", in *Participation*, (2004): 253.

The definition of participation that I will be using for this research necessitates 'deep' and 'broad' participation from the grassroots in development initiatives. This definition of participation must have the capacity to include participation in activities that would be considered 'political,' since the decision rests with the people at the grassroots. Development initiatives can therefore be either 'political' or 'non-political,' depending on the choices of the people who are involved. If donors control the development initiatives as such that all actions/initiatives are 'non-political' then a free decision making process is not occurring at the grassroots level.

'Real' participation for the purposes of this research must include input from a broad variety of grassroots actors (e.g. community representatives, local NGOs, local civil society associations, and affected citizens), at all levels (e.g. community, national, and international levels) and stages of the decision making process (e.g. from the very beginning with the choice of projects to implementation and monitoring).

NGOs and Participation and Representation

NGOs can restrict how deep and broad participation in development ends up being because citizens interacting with and 'participating' in decision-making through NGOs tend to align their requests with what an NGO is capable of providing. It is common to adopt the language, style, methods, and objectives of NGOs to obtain their support. When this support dries up however, many of the community participation initiatives (such as committees) 'dry up' as well.[114]

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[114] Jean-Philippe Platteau, "Pitfalls of Participatory Development," in *United Nations Participatory Governance*, (2008): 129, 131-132.

The operation of power at the local level also has an effect on how 'broad' participation can be. Even the practise of incorporating 'local knowledge' into development necessitates an understanding of how this knowledge is produced (and by whom), how it is potentially shaped by outside agendas and influences, and how it reflects social relationships. Even if 'local knowledge,' free from external and local power influences can be accessed, when final decisions are made by external actors they often fail to reflect this accumulation of 'local knowledge.[115]'

Another problem with participation through NGOs is that NGOs can end up being more devoted to delivering services that show results rather than promoting longer-term, difficult to quantify forms of participation.[116] Taking a 'technical' approach to participation (as a development 'tool' that can be implemented rather than a long-term approach) ignores the operation of power and control of information, and is an impediment to effective participation in development.[117] Technical approaches to participation may be enough in projects that use participation as a monitoring framework for a project or as a condition of project success, but they do not withstand a closer look at how participation is applied or whether it is reaching the desired actors. Technical approaches to participation also do not take into account changing social positions or interests over time, nor do they account for the willingness or ability within the population to participate.[118]

Julie Hearn points out that the vision of NGOs often ends up being similar to that of the World Bank, in that it shares the WB's stress on civil society and its doubts about the capacity of

[115] Mosse, "People's Knowledge,' Participation and Pastronage," in *Participation*, (2004): 17, 19-25.
[116] Paul Streeten, "NGOs and Development", 195-196.
[117] Frances Cleaver, "Institutions, Agency and the Limitations of Participatory Approaches", 38.
[118] Ibid, 49.

governments in the Global South to deliver services to its people.[119] NGOs are private, often

'entrepreneurial' organizations, providing services where the state has withdrawn (often due to

donor conditionality).[120] Development strategies are dominated by legal-political frameworks

and premised on 'individual' approaches (such as micro-finance) that enable the coherence of

neoliberal development agendas.[121] Because of the environment within which they operate,

NGOs are often forced to 'hop from one thing to another' and seldom 'set down roots' or take a

strategic long-term view, and end up shaping engagement along projects rather than processes.[122]

Hearn argues that NGO leaders are acting as 'neo-compradors[123]' in development, a "new

class based not on property ownership or government resources but derived from imperial

funding and their capacity to control significant popular groups.[124]" Veltmeyer and Petras agree

and posit that the best case would be for NGOs to convert themselves into socio-political

movements that could work together towards more substantial systemic change.[125]

According to these authors, although NGOs use the discourse of grassroots development and

community participation, in reality they focus attention and resources on "local micro-projects,

apolitical 'grassroots' self-exploitation and popular education that avoids class analysis of

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[119] Hearn, "The US Democratic Experiment in Ghana," 98

[120] Ian Gary, "Confrontation, Co-operation or Co-optation: NGOs and the Ghanaian State during Structural Adjustment," *Review of African Political Economy* 68 (1996): 149.

[121] Heloise Weber, "A Political Analysis of the Formal Comparative Method: Historicizing the Globalization Debate," *Globalizations* 1,4 (2007): 567-569.

[122] Deborah Eade, "International NGOs and Unions in the South: Worlds Apart or Allies in the Struggle?" in ed. Deborah Eade and Alan Leather, *Development NGOs and Labor Unions: Terms of Engagement*, (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc, 2005): 94.

[123] Julie Hearn uses a comprador analytical framework to explain the role of African NGOs in development. The term was used by Mao Tse Tung in 1926 to refer to the Chinese merchant class who were "wholly appendages of the international bourgeoisie, depending upon imperialism for their survival and growth" in Hearn, "African NGOs," 1098

[124] Hearn, "African NGOs," 1105, 1106

[125] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization*, 137-138, 130-131.

imperialism and capitalist profit-taking.[126]" Whether this is the case or not, even 'grassroots self-exploitation' implies that NGOs must have access to and be working with those at the grassroots.

Participation without Political Implications

According to some authors, NGOs promote a type of participation that is severed from political implications. Although participation through NGOs may offer more direct and responsive links to the population, this participation is stripped of political implications. Within the NGO development model, mobilization and participation occurs through non-partisan, single-issue groups rather than through loyal party membership as it did in the past.[127]

Samir Amin claims that new social movements have been 'de-politicized' and manifest themselves as fragmented 'issue-based' movements rather than polarized around class struggle and political ideologies.[128] Sarah White explains that when political issues arise in development that cannot be ignored, they are often reduced to technical problems that can be 'fixed' by development agencies such as NGOs. Participation is severed from its political implications and causes, and reduced to something that NGOs and other development partners can simply 'incorporate.'[129]

Some authors, such as Glyn Williams, argue that the dominant development paradigm promotes participation that favours personal reform over political struggles, treats the community as a 'fixed' entity, ignores power relations at the local level, and denies the role that development

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[126] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization*, 128

[127] Emma L. Clarence, Grant Jordan and William A Maloney, "Activating Participation: Generating Support for Campaign Groups", in ed. Sigrid Rossteutscher, *Democracy and the Role of Associations: Political, Organizational and Social Contexts*, (New York: Routledge, 2005): 133.

[128] Samir Amin, "Social Movements at the Periphery," in ed. Ponna Wignaraja, *New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People*, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1993): 76-77.

[129] Sarah White, "Depoliticizing Development: The Uses and Abuses of Participation," in ed. Jenny Pearce, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: Selected Essays from Development in Practice*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000): 143, 149

'experts' play in shaping the processes of participation. Successful 're-politicization' of participation according to Williams, would include the organization of large-scale protests and challenges to the official record of the state rather than simply offering a 'grassroots viewpoint' to the state through participatory techniques.[130]

Critical authors argue that it is impossible for a development movement to be apolitical when it is contributing to the engineering of social change. Policy making is always a political act, necessitating choices for where to use limited resources, and claiming to be apolitical only serves to support the status quo and further the cause of neo-liberal donor agendas.[131]

Karl Botchway challenges the apolitical nature of development interventions by referring to the 'Northern Region Rural Integrated Program' (NORRIP), a development project in partnership with CIDA in Ghana that began in the 1980s. The project report for NORRIP perceived development as providing services, but failed to address the representation of social, political, and economic interests in development. Based on this study, Botchway asserts that development projects often set out to ensure qualitative transformations in society, yet present the development process as apolitical. Development reports tend to "reduce the role of the state, politics, and power to a secondary and inconsequential aspect of the process of development.[132]" However, development projects involve the mobilization, organization, combination, use, and distribution of resources. These processes are inescapably political. Botchway decries the fact

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[130] Glyn Williams, "Towards a repoliticization of participatory development: political capabilities and spaces of empowerment," *Participation*, (2001): 92-93, 99.

[131] Shivji, *Silences in NGO Discourse*, 40-42.

[132] Botchway, "The Politics and Apolitics of Development," 320- 323.

that development agencies are expected to engineer social change, yet are not supposed to be involved in politics.[133]

Issa Shivji also criticizes the idea that NGOs are non-political, explaining that the separation between the economic and political realms does not exist in reality. He claims that NGOs, by accepting the myth of being non-political, inevitably side with the status quo.[134] This is not a problem if 'development' means continuing on the same path, but if communities and people at the grassroots believe in the necessity for change for development to occur, siding with the status quo means not allowing grassroots or community participation in decision making.

Participation in Implementation

Recent moves for greater public participation in development projects often only include participation in the implementation of projects.[135] External actors such as NGOs continue to set development agendas, simply giving local citizens and groups the chance to 'participate' in its implementation. 'Local community initiatives' are often begun by NGO partners and facilitators rather than local people.[136] The current development discourse focus on work with groups is a good example of how most participation in development occurs only in implementation rather than final decision-making. Working with groups may seem like a way to promote broader local empowerment and participation. However, without the time for local theory building, education and strong community mobilization, groups end up being monopolized by foreign donors and

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[133] Botchway, "The Politics and Apolitics of Development," 323-324
[134] Shivji, Silences in NGO discourse, 34-36, 39.
[135] Giles Mohan, "The Disappointments of Civil Society: The Politics of NGO Intervention in Northern Ghana," *Political Geography* 21 (2002): 142; Townsend, Porter, and Mawdsley, "Creating Spaces of Resistance," 874; and Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*, 44.
[136] From a case involving the NGO AAI, see Michael Tagoe, "Challenging the Orthodoxy of Literacy: Realities of Moving from Personal to Community Empowerment through Reflect in Ghana," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 27, 6 (2008): 723.

executives.[137] Others also argue that while many NGOs (and donors) may valorise local

knowledge and 'participation,' the organizations still implement management systems drawn

from the Western corporate world.[138]

Accordingly, 'deeper' types of grassroots or community participation (e.g. participation in

decision-making, planning, and agendas rather than only implementation) are not possible

through NGOs because of the inherently hierarchical relationship between the communities or

the 'grassroots' and NGOs. These authors argue that solidarity, as opposed to charity is

necessary for 'deeper' participation. Solidarity—according to this viewpoint—means sharing in

the risks of association and political movements. Solidarity also means 'within class solidarity'

(e.g. solidarity among the poor), rather than solidarity with an organization or a foreign donor as

a means to get a job or project done. These authors argue that real solidarity cannot exist

between NGOs and 'civil society' in Africa since NGOs are still accountable to foreign

donors.[139]

The main difference between solidarity as advocated by these authors and solidarity as

charity is the objective of this solidarity. For those involved in solidarity as charity, the main

objective of solidarity is to acquire funding for projects and organizations in the absence of a

larger political vision. In a Marxist view of solidarity on the other hand, the main objective of

solidarity is the process of education for the masses and the struggle to secure social

transformation, which is a part of a larger political vision of a future society.[140] Without

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[137] Gina Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World: Perspectives from Ghana," *Progress in Development Studies* 3, 2 (2003): 134-136.
[138] Mohan, "The Disappointments of Civil Society," 142
[139] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 135- 136; Firoze Manji, "Collaborations with the South: Agents of Aid or Solidarity?" in ed. Pearce, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society*, (2000): 78.
[140] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 135- 136; Manji, "Collaborations with the South," 78.

solidarity, participation by community members means implementing the NGOs' or donors' visions of development without addressing the wider social and political structure within which development occurs.

Access to the Grassroots through Partners

Although NGOs are perceived as being able to increase grassroots participation in development activities and act as advocates for the 'voiceless' because they are 'closer' to the grassroots,[141] one of the main ways that the literature claims that NGOs are able to access people at the 'grassroots' is through partners. International NGOs in particular tend to work with local NGOs or CBO in order to implement programs at the grassroots level.

There are inherent problems with this development approach: many NGOs end up only selecting partners to work with who have similar organizational structures and goals as the NGOs with whom they are collaborating.[142] Channelling aid through NGOs and 'official' organizations can lead to a situation where NGOs equate 'civil society' with organizations they are familiar with. Donors and NGOs may end up thus ignoring or marginalizing other types of civic associations that may be politically effective and legitimate but whom they do not consider 'official.'[143] This creates a situation in which Western donors and international NGOs are able to choose the types of civil society organizations that are able to participate legitimately in the development process. Key actors in civil society such as cooperatives, farmers, and informal

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[141] See for example Streeten's discussion of NGOs and: "their use of participatory, bottom-up, grassroots approaches to project implementation and their ability to reach and mobilize poor and remote communities" in Streeten, "NGOs and Development," 195-196.

[142] Alison Van Rooy and Mark Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower: Civil Society and the Aid System," in ed. Alison Van Rooy, *Civil Society and the Aid Industry,* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998): 66; Wachira Maina, "Kenya: The State, Donors and the Politics of Democratization," in ed. Van Rooy, Alison, *Civil Society*, (1998): 162, 136; Marc Abeles, "Rethinking NGOs: The Economy of Survival and Global Governance," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 15 (1), (2008): 243.

[143] Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 66.

groups, may be ignored—in spite of their power and influence in African society—in favour of formal organizations in the 'image' 'Western' organizations.[144] Only certain types of partners are invited to participate in development decision-making and consultations thus occur only with NGOs or development consultants, rather than a broader range of civil society actors.[145]

Why are NGOs Unable to Promote Effective Grassroots Participation?

The 'Aid Industry'

According to many authors, donor control is the main factor constraining NGOs from promoting effective participation in development. Understanding the way that scarce resources are used and by whom, as well as how they are made available to the population, is crucial to any understanding of power.[146] In the case of an analysis of NGOs, this is particularly salient because economic control is almost inevitably external. According to Dibie, the large majority of NGOs operating in Ghana are subsidiaries of international NGOs (INGOs) or civil society groups.[147] Even when these groups are operating domestically and employ domestic staff their funding is almost certainly coming from international donors and control is therefore external.[148]

Due to the reality of donor financial control, much of the critical literature on NGO involvement in development often lumps all NGOs together under a banner of donor co-option. These authors argue that since NGOs by their very nature derive their sustenance from the donor

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[144] Maina, "Kenya," 162, 136; Abeles, "RethinkingNGOs," 243; also see Gina Porter's analysis of working with international 'partners' in development in "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World: Perspectives from Ghana," *Progress in Development Studies* 3, (2), (2003): 134- 137.

[145] Abeles "RethinkingNGOs," 243

[146] Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983): 12.

[147] Josephine Dibie and Robert Dibie, "Motivation and Volunteerism in NGOs in Ghana and Nigeria," in ed. Dibie, *NGOs and Sustainable Development*, 121.

[148] Edoho, "Strategic Repositioning of NGOs," 207

community, decision-makers within NGOs often must sacrifice sovereignty for the continuation of development funds.[149]

Accordingly, certain types of partnerships between communities and NGOs are not possible because of NGOs' financial dependence on donors and the communities' financial dependence on the NGOs. Even when southern NGOs or domestic civil society organizations receive direct aid, the situation of dominant over dominated is unavoidable. "No matter how good the personal relationship between the Northern NGO and the Southern NGO [or local partner], the latter must accept the humiliation of being the receiver of charity.[150]" This unequal relationship necessarily breeds dependence. [151]

Clifford Bob argues that there is a marked difference between the activities that NGOs are able to engage in compared to social movements because of their different sources of funding and legitimacy. Participation (in this case by NGOs), according to Bob, only means participation in a manner and amount that is acceptable to and runs parallel with donor policies. Bob finds that "third-party support fosters co-optation, demobilization, and decline, as movements bend to powerful patrons who encourage moderation.[152]" In order to gain donor funding, local movements are stripped of complexity and presented as 'virtuous struggles against villainous foes.' This can divide movements from original goals of equity, social justice, and political

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[149] Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reductions," 136; Maria Garcia Castro, "Engendering Power in Neoliberal Times in Latin America: Reflections from the Left on Feminisms and Feminisms," *Latin American Perspectives* 28, (17): 34; Shivji, Silences in NGO discourse, 31- 32; and Ian Yeboah, "Subaltern Strategies and Development Practice," *The Geographical Journal* 172, 1 (2006): 50-59.
[150] Manji, "Collaborations with the South," 78.
[151] Christy Cannon, "NGOs and the State: A Case Study from Uganda," in ed. Pearce, *Development NGOs, and Civil Society*, (2000): 112.
[152] Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 14, 20, 184

inclusion.[153] In the case of the Ogoni struggle in Nigeria, the necessity to attract international

attention meant that original demands for political autonomy were dismissed in favour of more

donor-friendly environmental and human rights issues.[154] The necessity to meet donor agendas

can affect the ability for organizations to relate with communities and people at the 'grassroots.'

The quest for support and pressure to conform to NGO concerns can contravene a movement's

original goals and tactics, and estrange leaders from their mass bases of support. Some authors

argue that even when NGOs may try to support more radical social mobilization, the aid

environment is generally only interested in the technical services that development NGOs offer,

forcing them to covert themselves into 'enterprises or social consultancies' in order to maintain

financial resources.[155]

Another problem with the 'aid industry' is that donors tend to fund particular categories of

organizations (e.g. U.S. assistance to pro-democracy groups, Swedish and European Union (EU)

assistance to human rights groups, United Kingdom (UK) assistance to governance and civic

advocacy groups[156]). Bob's research indicates that movements that are successful in gaining

widespread international support have several features in common: They are well known

internationally for pre-existing non-political reasons (e.g. Tibet); they have pre-existing contacts

with NGO activists and knowledge of how NGOs operate; they have access to relatively large

budgets; they are largely unified and coherent; and they have leaders who are fluent in a key

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[153] Diana Mitlin, Sam Hickey and Anthony Bebbington, "Reclaiming Development? NGOs and the Challenge of Alternatives," *World Development* 35 (10), (2007): 1709-1710.
[154] Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, 20-22, 184, 185.
[155] F. Bombarolo and L. P. Coscio, 'Cambio y fortalecimiento institucioal de las ONGDs en América Latina: el caso de la Argentina', in Valderrama L. M. and L. P. Coscio (1998): 45, cited in Pearce, *Development, NGOs, and Civil Society*, 21.
[156] Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 65.

foreign language, especially English.[157] Donor-supported participation, according to this theory, must be politically 'neutral,' tied to a 'reputable' and formally organized NGO or CSO, and involve community leaders who are able to articulate in English. NGOs choose to support local organizations based on the costs and benefits of support. This is not to say that NGOs do not have altruistic motivations as well, but the continuation of their organizations rests on keeping their own interests in mind as well as those of the poor or oppressed.[158]

Joseph Jaime sees the role of NGOs in a positive light, but criticizes the donor system that they operate within for spoiling the positive role that NGOs could be playing in development. He sees NGOs as 'radical social critics,' but laments the fact that he believes that they have become co-opted into the 'aid industry,' causing a loss of ability to put forward development alternatives and take political initiative. He argues that in the 'aid industry,' development projects take precedence over development strategies and NGOs are unable to live up to their potential.[159]

Because of the constraints to acquire funding, NGOs are unable to act effectively in the interests of communities at the 'grassroots.' According to this view, the development paradigm within which NGOs operate plays a key role in how they are able to act. The current development discourse focuses on concepts of good governance,[160] debt reduction and poverty

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[157] Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, 43- 47.
[158] Ibid, 26- 37.
[159] Joseph A. Jaime, "NGOs: A Fragmented Dream," in ed. Deborah Eade and Ernst Ligteringen, *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future, Essays from Development in Practice,* (London: Oxfam GB, 2001): 145-147.
[160] 'Good Governance' refers to a set of claims, social practises, and rules that produce norms and expectations. As a discourse, it makes broad assumptions, legitimizes practises of power that lead people in one direction, affirms the validity of Western democracy, and legitimizes specific forms of economic liberalization. What this means for civil society is increasing civil society participation, but quantity of participation over quality. (From Malinda Smith, "Discourses on Development: Beyond the African Tragedy," in ed. Malinda Smith, *Beyond the African Tragedy: Discourses on Development and the Global Economy*, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2006): 6) For an

amelioration, and tends to treat Africa as a 'tragedy.[161]' This focus on endogenous explanations

(e.g. 'bad' governance) and 'technical solutions' (e.g. debt reduction and effective governance)

to African 'underdevelopment' forces NGOs to fit into these roles or risk losing funding.

The current development paradigm also normalizes a political structure that reproduces a

particular type of social and political power. The NGO model has become an important part of

this development paradigm. According to this view, the 'NGO-ization' of development means

that local movements are forced to frame themselves to fit with this model in order to obtain

funding. Local movements whose causes do not 'fit' the donor consensus will have trouble

gaining funding and support abroad. [162] Aid from external sources can also change the power

relations within small communities, elevating and giving resources to some organizations over

others.[163]

Why Donors Matter: External Accountability

Another concern with donor control of NGOs that arises in the literature is the ties that NGOs

end up having to foreign governments. Although NGOs are not nominally tied to governments,

in reality this is not the case. NGOs frequently collaborate with and receive funding from

governments. NGO staffs are accountable to overseas donors, and one of their key tasks is to be

able to design proposals that will secure funding.[164] NGOs have generally needed the host

government's approval to operate, and must have positive relationships with respective African

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excellent critical analysis of the use of the term 'good governance' in development, see Rita Abrahamson's
Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and the Good Governance Agenda in Africa.
[161] Smith, "Discourses on Development," 6.
[162] Castro, "Engendering Power in Neoliberal Times," 20, 28, 33; and White, "Depoliticizing Development," 152.
[163] Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, 185.
[164] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 132.

governments in order for their projects to succeed.[165] Some of the literature indicates that the

relationship between donors and donor countries and African states has an impact on the amount

of funding that NGOs operating in that country will receive. In a case study of African NGOs

conducted by Robert Dibie, seventy percent of respondents indicated that the type of bilateral

relationship between the donor nation and the African state indicated the level of funding that

their NGO would get in most cases.[166] This study shows that although NGOs are theoretically

independent of relationships between states, the reality of the situation is that politics heavily

influence funding. In other words, if the relationship between the donor nation and the African

state is favourable, the level of funding from the donor nations to INGO projects in these

countries increases. If the relationship is weak, funding from donors to INGOs decreases or is

ended altogether.

The effects of foreign government agendas on who NGOs decide to partner with and what

types of CSOs are able to 'participate' in development is also evidenced by a study by Dibie in

1996. Until December 1996, US political aid was concentrated on electoral support (i.e. running

'free' and 'fair' elections) in Ghana and distributed through two initiatives run by NGOs, one of

which was the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). In July 1997, the IFES

began a $6 million project called Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level

(ECSELL), which had the aim of building up the capacity and effectiveness of civil society

organizations (CSOs) and strengthening the relationships between civil society and local

government.[167] Hearn argues that the ECSELL project is very strategic and involves an effort to

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[165] Puplampu, "State-NGO Relations," 143, 150; Dibie, *NGOs and Sustainable Development*, 49.
[166] Ibid, 55.
[167] Dibie and Dibie, "Motivation and Volunteerism in NGOs," 101-102.

decrease the control exercised by the government on civil society, particularly in rural areas. She

argues that rather than creating stronger ties between all CSOs and government, CSOs loyal to

the government are pitted in opposition to donor-funded CSOs (who engage with other civil

society actors instead of political parties or government workers/elected officials).[168] A study by

Ian Anderson on DFID-funded initiatives also found that organizations receiving higher levels of

donor government funding ended up having lower levels of advocacy.[169]

Why Donors Matter: 'De-politicization'

As NGOs grow and gain more financial resources, there seems to be a trend towards

professionalization and de-politicization. One author explains the case of Mexican NGOs

evolving from "organizations that aimed at deep social change through raising consciousness,

demand making, and opposition with government, to organizations that aim at incremental

improvement of the poor's living conditions through community self-reliance and formulation of

workable solutions.[170]" This may be in large part a response to donor demands, since the WB

makes it clear that viable CBO partners must diminish their political character and enhance their

managerial and technical capabilities.[171] When NGOs receive funds from the WB, Kamat found

that they move away from education and empowerment programs that stress the structural causes

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[168] Dibie and Dibie, "Motivation and Volunteerism in NGOs," 103.

[169] Ian Anderson, "Northern NGO advocacy: perceptions, reality, and the challenge," in ed. Eade and Ligteringen, *Debating Development*, (2001): 225.

[170] Sangeeta, Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era," *Review of International Political Economy* 11, 1 (2004): 168.

[171] Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest," 168. Kamat takes this example from a 1998 World Bank document directive that explains that one of the weaknesses of NGOs is their limited "managerial and technical capacity, narrow context for programming, and politicization." The World Bank therefore believed (at that time) that more managerial and technical capacity and less politicization were necessary for NGOs to be more successful.

of power and inequality and instead focus on more technical assessments of the capacities and needs of communities.[172]

With donor support there seems to be a shift to a managerial and functional approach to social change. Increasing demands for reports and measurable achievements means a greater emphasis on sector-specific, less politicized technical knowledge rather than a larger knowledge, understanding, or analysis of the causes of poverty and more holistic theories on how to approach and address problems of poverty.[173]

The NGO development model disregards theory, privileging instead only activism. The necessity to acquire donor funds leads NGOs to unite only on particular issues but not sustain any long-term or cross-issue solidarity, and to seek support from donors who prefer to support 'attractive' causes that have the potential for quick 'success' rather than long-term low impact struggles.[174] Failure to clarify their own theoretical positions means that NGOs often end up simply responding to immediate visible needs or implementing a vision on their donors' behalf.[175] In this case, development issues are generally abstracted from the social, economic, political, and historical realities of the situation.[176] Commins agrees and argues that NGOs often do not have the time or capacity to link policy making and practical program experience, and are faced with the choice of accepting "the role of passing out the soup [in the global 'soup kitchen'] or they can seek to be something quite different, however difficult that is to achieve.[177]" The

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[172] Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest," 167- 168.
[173] Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest," 167- 168; Mitlin et al, "Reclaiming Development?," 1702, 1709, 1711.
[174] Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, 40, 95, 120.
[175] Pearce, "Development, NGOs, and Civil Society," in ed. Pearce, 34; and Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*, 114.
[176] Shivji, *Silences in NGO discourse*, 36.
[177] Stephen Commins, "NGOs: Ladles in the Global Soup Kitchen?" in ed. Pearce, *Development, NGOs and Civil Society*, 72.

first option seems to be the most popular, as one Ghanaian informant explained to Gina Porter: "There's not much interest in policy—it's tacked on, there's a broad sentiment of concern about the World Bank development paradigm, but most people are happy to operate within it.[178]" Without a theoretical base and with the necessity to follow donor agendas, field staffs end up jumping from one project to another, causing discontinuity in their work. Operating outside of this system would require a re-evaluation of their present roles and the policy impacts of their work, and a more theoretical evaluation of their rationale for existence.[179] Samir Amin goes further to argue from a world systems theory perspective that it is not possible to overcome the problems of underdevelopment that NGOs are attempting to solve within a capitalist system. He claims that these movements need to strengthen the state or else risk compradorization through donor control (by either Western state or international actors). Amin's solution would involve cementing political alliances, overcoming internal conflicts, and formulating an alternative national project.[180] Others argue however, that even issue-based projects can lead to broader social mobilization when issue-based social mobilization lays the base for conjoined activities.[181]

<u>Why Donors Matter: Competition and Demands for Quick 'Successes'</u>

According to some of the literature, NGOs are constrained to promoting certain types of participation because procuring donor funding necessarily creates competition among NGOs for funding. Veltmeyer and Petras explain that one of the reasons that NGO involvement can cause

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[178] Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction," 136.

[179] Commins, "NGOs," 70.

[180] Amin, "Social Movements," 82, 89. World Systems theorists argue that nation-states act in a certain way based on their position in the international system. Accordingly, the world can be divided into core, semi-periphery, and periphery countries, with periphery countries focusing on resource extraction and low-skilled production that benefits and maintains the 'core' countries' wealth. From this perspective there is an international division of labour between nation states rather than within nation states. See Immanuel Wallerstein for more information.

[181] Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction: Dimensions of Radical Philosophy," in ed. Roger S. Gottlieb, *Radical Philosophy: Tradition, Counter-Tradition, Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): 206.

fragmentation among movements and division amongst communities is that communities and organizations often end up fighting over NGO aid rather than uniting against the causes of their poverty.[182]

Donor demands also affect the type of participation that NGOs are able to promote because of the necessity for NGOs to demonstrate programmatic success in order to continue receiving funding. The necessity for quick turnover in order to get funding, the greater possibility of quick 'success' of isolated issue projects, and the lack of long-term research in most areas of development means that participation takes a particular form.[183] Community empowerment programs organized through AAG, as an example from one study, focus on singular issues of environmental management, sanitation, and women's participation in community affairs (to name a few) without addressing the wider causes and implications of these issues or creating broader based cross-issue community participation or engagement.[184]

Other Constraints on NGOs: Organizational Type and Physical and Social Distance to the 'Grassroots'

Much of the above literature points to donor constraints inhibiting the ability of NGOs to promote effective participation and act as effective grassroots representatives. Some research however, shows that the inability to act effectively is not necessarily a donor constraint because it is not a problem with all NGOs, but depends on the type of organization. Some NGOs are principled agencies with distinctive missions, while others have the same survival needs as other

[182] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 130-131
[183] Shivji, *Silences in NGO discourse*, 34-36.
[184] Tagoe, "Challenging the Orthodoxy of Literacy," 719.

organizations, and have the organizations' own interests at heart rather than the interests of those they presume to be helping.[185]

Another potential reason for NGOs' potential inability to act as effective grassroots representatives is the fact that NGOs are not accountable to or elected by the public. WB literature asserts that the "ability of democratic regimes to deliver more effectively to their citizens depends on the accountability and responsiveness of state institutions.[186]" International NGOs working in Africa are particularly not legitimated by ties to a defined public, and thus lack accountability.[187] In a liberal democracy, laws and rules are in place to organize society in such a way that citizens are able to know (at least nominally) to whom they should air grievances, who exercises legitimate power, and how to hold these institutions and people accountable. When the state loses the ability to exercise sovereign power, the rules are blurred and it is easy to see how citizens would lose faith in democratic institutions. When private interests take over, citizens lose the ability to understand who is representing them, how to communicate grievances, and how to achieve policy change.[188] Although international aid organizations have contributed to infrastructure and service development, if they receive credit from the people for *all* projects in the districts (as suggested separately by Ayee and Mohan[189]) it causes government institutions that have at least some accountability mechanisms to lose legitimacy.

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[185] Nelson, "NGOs in the Foreign Aid System," 324.
[186] Nicholas Amposah, "Institutions and Economic Performance: Ghana's experience Under the Fourth Republic, 1992-2002," in Boafo-Arthur, *Ghana*, (2007): 106.
[187] Dibie, *NGOs and Sustainable Development*, 5.
[188] Ninsin, "Markets," 100-101.
[189] Joseph R.A. Ayee, "Local Government, Decentralization and State Capacity in Ghana," in ed, Tettey, Puplampu and Berman, *Critical Perspectives*, (2003): 63, 74, 75; Mohan, "The Disappointments of Civil Society," 146, 149

<u>Physical and Social Distance to the grassroots</u>

   Another potential constraint on NGOs' abilities to promote effective participation and act as

effective grassroots representatives is their physical and social distance to grassroots actors.[190]

Social distance determines the accessibility of actors to one another: "The organization of ritual,

ceremony, and everyday life in very many societies leads different people of different social

categories to be located in a way that maps social space onto physical space, *which in turn*

radically affects the possibility of communication and interaction between them [italics

added].[191]" Social position also affects these interactions, because social expectations are

communicated concerning which other participants are legitimate to include, which issues are

legitimate to discuss, and which ways of proceeding are legitimate to pursue.[192] Due to the

likelihood of difference in social position and social distance between NGO staffs and grassroots

actors,[193] this framework will be useful in the following chapters in relation to the interactions

between these two groups, and the possibilities of grassroots participation promoted by NGOs.

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[190] The terms 'social distance,' 'social proximity,' and 'social position' refer to separate theoretical frameworks. "Social proximity refers to the dense interactions and 'bonding' of social relations in social networks. (Tukahirwa, "Access," 582 -591). "Social distance is the degree of separation between two social entities in terms of an appropriate social metric (From Good, "Social Distance"). Social distance is also related to social status, since vertical social distance is determined in part by comparative social status.[190] Social position is not necessarily the same as social status, and for the purposes of this research social position will be used to refer to social status (i.e. a more static concept) in conjunction with 'situational' social position (i.e. a more fluid concept that changes in relation to constantly changing 'positions' in social situations). Social position includes different frameworks that 'positions' work within, such as exclusionary frameworks (e.g. social positions that do not normally 'go together' such as "Scientist" and "Organized Protestor" or "Concerned Citizen" and "Administrator") in contrast to inclusionary frameworks such as "Administrator" and "Scientist." These social positions are not static and actors may perform different roles in different social situations. (Boraa and Hausendorf, "Participation and Beyond," (2009): 616.
[191] David Good, "Social Distance," *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, accessed May 06, 2012, at http://www.credoreference.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/entry/cupsoc/social_distance
[192] Alfons Boraa and Heiko Hausendorf , "Participation and Beyond: Dynamics of Social Positions in Participatory Discourse," *Comparative Sociology* 8 (2009): 616.
[193] A study by Lammers et al uses empirical analysis to prove that power (as long as it is legitimate) increases the social distance actors feel towards one another. From Joris Lammers, Adam D. Galinsky, Ernestine H. Gordijn and Sabine Otten, *Power Increases Social Distance Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3, (2012): 282 originally published online 15 August 2011.

For the purposes of this research, the term 'social distance' is used to refer to the social separation created by social class, status, and situational 'social position.' Increased social distance creates communication barriers and decreases the perceived accessibility of NGO staffs to grassroots actors.

Although NGOs are often perceived as having close ties to the 'grassroots,[194]' some authors argue that most NGOs (foreign and domestic) and CSOs tend to be run and staffed by well-educated urban elites.[195] The elite base of NGO control may create greater social distance to the grassroots, and causes some authors to question their ability to represent people at the grassroots and be a 'voice for the people.' These urban elites often come from jobs in large companies or large international organizations and join NGOs as alternatives to jobs within an impoverished civil service.[196] According to research done by Gina Porter, Ghanaian NGO staff tend to follow this trend of being part of an urban-based educated elite, with little experience with more disadvantaged locations in the country.[197] Chazan cautions that the specific people working within the organization and their external ties can affect their ability to connect with people at the 'grassroots.' However, elite status is not the only factor that has an effect on staff abilities to reach people at the grassroots. People within specific organizations may be elites, but these elites may still maintain strong ties to hometowns on the periphery, or with non-elite social groups.[198]

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[194] Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*, 73.
[195] Abeles, "RethinkingNGOs," 249; Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 128; Shivji, *Silences in NGO discourse*, 30-31; and Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction," 139.
[196] Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 51.
[197] Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction," 139.
[198] Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*, 257.

Gramsci argue that social status or class affects the possibility of solidarity between elites and the 'poor and marginalized.' He uses a class analysis to explain how 'organic intellectuals' are created alongside the elite class in a society in order to create the conditions most favourable to that class, or to at least choose 'deputies' (e.g. specialized employees) to organize the system of relationships in the most favourable way to their class. These intellectuals are the "thinking and organising elements of a particular fundamental social class.[199]" The term intellectual for Gramsci, as he explains, is not determined by participation in intellectual activity, but rather by the position of their activities within the general complex of social relations. In a capitalist society for example, Gramsci's intellectuals are characterized by their position in relation to industry.[200]

Gramsci argues that these new intellectuals are active participants in the practical life of society as constructors, organizers, and 'permanent persuaders.[201]' Gramsci's intellectuals, although not necessarily characterized by 'intellectual' activities, are never the less always serving an educative function. His intellectuals are basically 'elites' in a given area of society, who enjoy a higher living standard than the average peasant, and to which the peasant is subordinate. He claims, therefore, that "every organic development of the peasant masses, up to a certain point, is linked to and depends on movements among the intellectuals.[202]" Gramsci's analysis is relevant to a study of NGOs in development. As explored further below, NGOs tend to be elites compared to the average grassroots actor, and predominantly serve educative functions for the grassroots.

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[199] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Political Writings (1910-1920)*, ed. Quintin Hoare, "Introduction," (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977): 3.
[200] Gramsci, *Selections*, 5-8, 18.
[201] Ibid, 10.
[202] Gramsci, *Selections*, 14-15.

When NGOs do not have ties to the 'grassroots,' some literature argues that these NGOs are only able to use local partners to engage with communities at the grassroots. Giles Mohan explains that in many cases Northern NGOs use Southern partners as intermediaries when they operate at the village level. She goes on to argue however, that although there is a perception that SNGO partners are 'closer' to local communities and understand the culture, in many cases SNGOs may act in "equally patronizing, dictatorial, and bureaucratic ways towards the villages they represent.[203]"

When NGOs do end up working with partners or gaining direct access to people at the 'grassroots,' some of the literature argues that the majority of NGOs end up acting as 'experts' in development in relation to their local partners, or using 'enlightened' top-down control rather than bottom-up approaches.[204] With greater access to education and resources, NGO staff act as experts who apply development paradigms constructed internationally to local projects in the 'global South.' NGO 'expert' control of agendas, participation, and discussions thus subjugate minority voices and the 'voice' of those at the grassroots.[205]

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[203] Mohan, "The Disappointments of Civil Society," 143.
[204] Streeten, , "NGOs and Development", 195-196.
[205] Anna Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability: Non-State Actors' Capital in Global Governance," *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 33, 3, (2005): 726, 731, 737.

CHAPTER FIVE: GHANA CASE STUDY: OPERATIONALIZING EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Participation and Representation: Goals and Practise

This chapter begins with a look at how the different types of NGOs view their roles in development and what they are trying to achieve, as well as their ideological orientations.[206] This is followed by an analysis of what the NGOs are actually doing in practise compared to what they set out to achieve.

International/Elite Initiated NGOs

Organizational Missions, Ideology, and Value Consensus

Although all of the 'international/elite-initiated' NGOs that participated in this research have different mandates and goals, they all serve both service and advocacy functions. The organizations differ greatly in their ideological orientations and discourse, and on the clarity of their missions and goals. Some of the organizations have very clear focuses and seem to have a good understanding of what they are attempting to achieve in conjunction with their actual capabilities. HRAO and SDO for example, have clear focuses on HR advocacy programs and child protection and advocacy for policy development surrounding play and sports for development, respectively. The CDD also has a very clear mandate, along with clear ideological underpinnings focussed on promoting liberal economic principles. In contrast, some of the other NGOs in this category are attempting to assume a very wide variety of roles. CARE has stated goals which include 'rebuilding after emergencies,' 'tackling the roots of poverty,' 'strengthening CBOs', 'equipping people to do their own advocacy,' and 'making sure the poor

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[206] This chapter will use the 'DAWN' categorization of NGOs that was outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis: 1) International/Elite Initiated NGOs; 2) Grassroots Initiated NGOs; and 3) NGOs with Political Party Roots.

have a say in decision making.' In this case the advocacy functions seem somewhat 'tacked on' to their programs, and lack a clear ideological foundation. Their literature also fails to explain their understanding of the 'roots of poverty' as well as any analysis of international systemic or structural causes of poverty.[207]

The NGOs in this category had views of their roles that ranged from "shifting power relations in favour of the poor[208]" (AAG) to 'sharing knowledge and holding the public trust[209]' (CDD). Most agreed that it was necessary to work with the state to bring development to the country, but also discussed the necessity for NGOs to work to hold the government accountable. "So somebody has to hold the state accountable, and that's the role of NGOs. We help to bring the voice of the people to the fore; we help to make the government accountable.[210]" Although the NGOs had very different missions and goals—along with very different ideological backgrounds—they all agreed that one of their roles was to work to hold the state accountable to the people.

Within this category there was also a wide range of organizational ideologies, ranging from liberal economic principles[211] (CDD) to no clear ideological standpoint (CARE), to using discourse in opposition to a neo-liberal framework that included a rights-based approach to development[212] and re-politicization of development activities (AAG in conjunction with AAI).

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[207] CARE International, "Who we are," accessed May 10th, 2012 at: http://www.careinternational.org.uk/who-we-are
[208] ActionAid Ghana, *ActionAid Ghana Annual Report 2008*, (Accra: Action Aid Ghana, 2008): 2.
[209] Theodore Dzeble, Interview by the author, CDD Office, Accra, Ghana, October 15, 2009.
[210] Anonymous, Interview by the author, SDO Office, Accra, Ghana, November 9, 2009.
[211] Gyimah-Boadi, interviewed by Ivor Agyeman-Duah, *An economic history of Ghana: reflections on a half-century of challenges & progress*, (Michigan: Ayebia Clarke Pub., 2008): 225. Dr. Gyimah-Boadi promotes a liberal economic viewpoint in this interview, emphasizing that economic decisions need to be made based on "strict economic considerations.
[212] For a more detailed description of the 'rights-based approach to development' and its ascendance in development, please see Peter Uvin, "From the right to development to the rights-based approach: how 'human

Although all of the organizations expressed strong non-partisanship, their ideological orientations often demonstrated an obvious affinity for one party. The CDD for example, insists strongly on non-partisanship but explains on their website that they are dedicated to the promotion of liberal economic reforms in Ghana. Staff complained that they were 'suspicious' of the current (NDC) administration, but that the NPP had nominated them for an award for their work.[213]

Even when there appeared to be a strong organizational ideological underpinning, these NGOs often lacked organization-wide ideological dissemination to their staffs. Some of the NGO staffs in this group did seem to have clear understandings of the NGO's philosophy, underlying ideology and goals. However, when asked about the NGO's underlying philosophy or mission (such as how they perceive the causes of poverty) some staffs were found to be reading material from the NGO website during the interview to answer questions.[214] There was a clear difference in staff knowledge and understanding of AAG programs and philosophies between the AAG staffs that participated in this study, demonstrating a problem associated with

rights' entered development," *Development in Practice*, 17: 4, (2007): 597- 606; also see Sam Hickey and Diane Mitlin, *Rights-Based Approaches to Development: Exploring the Potential and Pitfalls*, (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2009). Some criticisms of the rights-based approach argue that it is only a re-representation of existing orientations, rather than a new approach to development, and that it 'fits' within a neo-liberal development paradigm. Critics argue that the rights-based approach reduces collectivity in societies (or downplays it) because rights are focussed on the individual and do not promote asset redistribution in society. Katsuhiko Masaki (in "Recognition or Misrecognition: Pitfalls of Indigenous Peoples' Free, Prior, and Informed Consent," in ed. Hickey and Mitlin, *Rights-Based Approaches to Development*) argues that rights cannot be introduced from the outside; development strategies need to emerge from groups themselves in a process of self-determination. Other authors argue that rights exist in a capitalist and liberal democratic world, so even when 'economic, social and cultural rights' are promoted, certain rights (such as civil and political rights) fit more easily into the current system and will be more easily assimilated and institutionalized. This author also contends however, that rights based approaches can be part of an alternative project to the neo-liberal order, but only if they are elaborated and include well-thought out strategies for inclusion.

[213] Dzeble, Interview.

[214] Kojo Ansah and Mercy Kwafia, Interview by the author, CARE international office, Accra, Ghana, November 24th, 2009; Ohemeng-Agyei, Interview.

large organizations that have high numbers of staffs that need to be trained and educated in the NGO's mission, programs, and philosophy.

For the most part the staffs of these NGOs joined the organizations in competitive hiring processes. The reasons for joining the NGO varied, but staff members from three different NGOs in this category (CDD, AAG, and CARE) explained that they applied after seeing the position advertized. Staffs from other NGOs mentioned being hired in foreign countries (CPC and HRAO) and following the job back to Ghana.

NGO Work in Practise

Possibly due to the current development paradigm focus on community participation, many of the NGOs' discourses relate to learning from communities and promoting community decision-making at all levels. In practise however, many of the NGOs in this category apply top-down decision-making processes in their programs and act as experts who teach community members but have little to learn from them in return. HRAO staff for example, expressed the belief that NGOs are "important representatives because they come with a special expertise and they bring diverse experiences that can help the development process.[215]" All of the NGOs in this category are engaged in teaching activities in the communities that they are working with. Within their teaching role, NGO staffs act as experts who share their knowledge with the people at the grassroots. The CDD is a good illustration of these NGOs' self-assessments as 'experts:' they conduct research to assess the situation in Ghana, and use the findings from their research in

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[215] Anna Jay, Interview Transcripts, HRAO office, Accra, (November 18, 2009): 38.

conjunction with the views of internal and external 'experts' to disseminate these views to the public and push the government to adopt policies in line with their priorities.[216]

Participation through these NGOs occurs mostly in implementation, and often only along the lines that are acceptable to the NGO (and their donors). The partners that they choose to interact with must be 'credible' and non-partisan.[217] Participation through these NGOs therefore includes and excludes certain activities—for example generally excluding any involvement in activities that are considered political. In the CDD's case, they actively engage to prevent participation in governance that is not in line with their views. In the 2008 election, the CDD met with the police and the National Security Council to share their findings on who might be involved in trying to cause unrest during the elections so that they could put a stop to it. They also published the names of the people who might be likely to cause unrest in the newspaper.[218] This demonstrates a strong bias against allowing the people to choose to engage in participation that does not fit with the CDD's views: 'Participation' according to the CDD in this case, does not include "confrontational process that people at the grassroots must struggle for from below[219]"as promoted by authors such as Vivian. Other NGOs in this category were more open to a variety of forms of participation by grassroots actors. However, participation through NGOs in this category predominantly takes the form of consultations with communities once the projects have already been selected and approved at higher policy levels.

The NGOs that have discrepancies between their discourse and actions often have less clear mandates or no clear ideological base from which to drive their programs. With less of a

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[216] Gyimah-Boadi, *Economic History of Ghana*, 26.
[217] Dr. Rasheed Draman, Interview by the author, CPC Office, Accra, Ghana, October 14th, 2009.
[218] Dzeble, Interview.
[219] Vivian, "Foundations for Sustainable Development" in ed. Ghai and Vivian, *Grassroots Environmental Action*, (1992): 53.

clear ideological or theoretical 'backbone' to drive their programs, these NGOs tend to have more contradictions between what they set out to achieve and what they are able to do in practise. The advocacy side of some of these NGOs (such as CARE for example) seems to be somewhat 'tacked on', rather than a well thought-out plan of action with strong theoretical underpinnings.

In other cases (such as with CDD and CPC), the organizations seem to have very strong theoretical underpinnings and are conscious of their plans and how they fit with their capacities. In these cases, when deep and broad participation does not occur, it seems to be more of an organizational choice rather than an inability to fulfill a goal. In other words, these NGOs are acting more deliberately as experts and trustees, who are secure in their belief that they 'know best' and therefore have no need to access the people at the grassroots to receive input into development programs. This is in contrast to the NGOs that lack clear theoretical frameworks or consciousness of their guiding principles. The latter NGOs may fail to promote 'deep' and 'broad' participation simply because their advocacy plans and desire to promote participation from the grassroots are not well thought out or ingrained in the organization's roots or mission, or well understood throughout the organization.

Grassroots Initiated NGOs: Wacam

Organizational Mission, Ideology, and Value Consensus

Wacam seeks to ensure that the rights of mining communities are respected and assist communities whose lands have been usurped by mining companies, as well as to raise public

awareness on issues concerning the effects of extractive industries in the country.[220] According to its founders, Wacam was not created to act as an NGO:

> "Wacam wants to transform into a social movement, and that's a journey. Initially when we started the organization we were following our hearts, as we were following our visions. And we thought we could struggle against the multinationals with our own resources. Two years down the line I had broken down my vehicle and then it was becoming difficult to function, and it was then that we recognized that it was important to become an NGO and be able to source for funding… So we think that the NGO work gives us, pushes us. It is a means.[221]"

In Wacam's case, the NGO concept was a bit of an afterthought. The founders were working in the ministry of agriculture and noticed that the mining companies were encroaching on the farms, and people were worried. They pulled the people together and began a project to get community concerns published, but eventually decided along with the communities that they should start WACAM.[222]

Wacam believes that NGOs (especially 'grassroots' NGOs) play a necessary role in development because they understand communities and their problems better than other development actors. One staff member explained however that at Wacam "we don't want to be representing communities, we want communities to take the initiative for themselves.[223]" They do however engage in campaigning at the national level for the communities' rights and in policy advocacy.[224]

[220] Wacam, "Wacam," accessed on January 10, 2012, at: http://www.wacamghana.com/index.php/aboutus

[221] D. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.

[222] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.

[223] Jerry Mensah-Pah, Interview by the author, Wacam Office, Tarkwa, Ghana, November 3, 2009.

[224] Mensah-Pah, Interview; Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, Interview by the author, TUC Office, Accra, Ghana, November 12, 2009.

Wacam staff also explained that Wacam wants to provide community people with the tools to be able to deconstruct the current development orthodoxy and 'make their own decisions on the nature of the development paradigm.[225]' Wacam staff discussed how they work to build the communities into organizations that are able to struggle for their rights, and they also try to build solidarity across communities so that they can learn from each other, act collectively, and feel more empowered.[226] Wacam tries to give people knowledge so that they can demand accountability from government and duty-bearers. 'Everyone is talking about political participation right now, but how do people participate without knowledge?[227]'

Wacam staff argued that development initiatives are necessarily political processes. Although they did not specify a particular ideological orientation, they used radical leftwing language in their material, workshops, and interviews, and argued for an alternative development paradigm not focused on capital or foreign direct investment.[228]

Wacam is not a member-based organization, but the staff members have all chosen to work with the organization (or start the organization) because they lived in the mining areas and have seen the devastation caused by mining companies in the communities, and are passionate about the cause. Both of the staff members that I interviewed in Tarkwa (who constituted the entire staff in Tarkwa) had joined the organization as volunteers, and had later been hired on as full time staff.[229] This is in clear contrast to many of the other organizations that I interviewed,

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[225] Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, Interview by the author, Wacam Office, Tema, Ghana, November 30, 2009.
[226] D. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.
[227] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.
[228] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.
[229] Mensah-Pah, Interview; Lloyd Paul Ahorney, Interview by the author, Wacam Office, Tarkwa, Ghana, November 3, 2009; D. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview; H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.

who when asked about their decisions to join a certain NGO, explained that they saw an advertisement in the newspaper or they needed a job and decided to apply.[230]

NGO Work in Practise

Wacam works with community members, community organizations, and community leaders at the grassroots level. When they go into a community for the first time, they initially go to the chief or community leader and tell them what Wacam stands for and what they seek to achieve in the community. After they have contacted the chief, they contact the community people, gather them, tell them what Wacam does, and ask them to form a group. The group then chooses a chairman, secretary, and volunteers to do various tasks.[231] After they have formed a group, Wacam is able to start training programs for them that are done through volunteers.[232]

Systematic participation is implemented by Wacam through the formation of core community groups. These community groups are then zoned, so that four or five communities form a zone, and zone officers liaise with Wacam's community mobilization officer (Jerry Mensah-Pah). Wacam staff members go to each zone at least once every quarter to discuss what they have been doing and what they may need.[233] While Wacam provides support and feedback to the communities, final decision-making power on how they will proceed is often left in the hands of the communities themselves. The community mobilization officer explained that

[230] Ohemeng-Agyei, Interview; Sam Ocran, Interview by the author, RAVI office, Accra, Ghana, November 12, 2009; Ansah, Interview; Dzeble, Interview.
[231] Mensah-Pah, Interview.
[232] Ibid.
[233] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.

Wacam may organize communities in the beginning, but their goal is for communities to take the initiative and make decisions on what steps to take.[234]

The selection of projects also demonstrates their commitment to community participation in final decision making. Wacam's board of directors decides what projects to pursue. The board is chosen from among community members, by the community members themselves, although the existing board does have a say in incorporating new board members. Community members identify people that are committed to Wacam's cause, introduce them to the board, and the board may choose to incorporate them. These board members are chosen based on the zone areas.[235]

Part of the way that Wacam works with communities is through teaching at training workshops and through a published volunteer training manual. Wacam's training manual demonstrates an attempt at 'deep' participation in decision-making by communities. Wacam's vision and mission statement are presented in the manual, and community members are asked:

> Do you think Wacam's vision and mission are achievable? Do
> they reflect your views? Do you have any suggestions with respect
> to changes to Wacam's mission and vision statements?[236]

At the training workshops, community representatives are taught about the Ghanaian constitution, the mining and minerals act, and their rights under these laws.[237] Representatives

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[234] Mensah-Pah, Interview. Mr. Mensah-Pah demonstrated Wacam's attempts to not interfere in the communities during my research. Originally he planned on accompanying me to one of the communities to talk to community members, but decided to send me on my own because he had noticed that when he went out with observers he ended up talking more than the community members and drowning out their perspectives on matters.

[235] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview. Gender equality has become an important issue for Wacam, and there is an attempt to have fifty percent female representation on the board, although this has yet to occur in practise.

[236] Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, and John Opoku, *Training Manual for Advocacy in Mining Communities*, (Accra: WACAM, 2009): 102.

[237] AAG also conducts community information workshops on the Mining and Minerals Act in the Brong-Ahafo Region.

are chosen by their communities to go to the workshops, and are expected to bring what they have learned back to the communities.[238]

There seemed to be some discrepancies between what Wacam is attempting to do on the ground and what they were actually able to achieve in some cases. The communities never organize together for demonstrations, even though Wacam staffs emphasized the importance of mobilizing communities to join together against the mining companies.[239] Wacam does attempt to build relationships between the communities at their workshops. During a workshop from November 17th to 19th 2009 in Tema, forty-two representatives from different communities were brought together and encouraged throughout the workshop to share experiences with each other, build relationships, and give each other their contact information so that they could continue the dialogue with each other after the workshop had ended.[240] They also worked at the workshops to create links between the community members and the media, by inviting journalists who are empathetic to the communities' concerns to participate and learn with the community members and hear their concerns.[241]

NGOs with Political Party Roots: DWM (December 31st Women's Movement)

Organizational Mission, Ideology, and Value Consensus

DWM did not start with the goal of being an NGO, and Madame Rawlings does not believe that NGOs are the best means to achieve development objectives. In their 1984

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[238] Wacam workshop, Personal Notes, Health Services Worker's Union of Ghana Hospitality Centre, Tema, Ghana, November 17, 2009.
[239] Emilia Amoateng, Interview by the author, Personal Residence,Teberebie, Ghana, November 4, 2009.
[240] Wacam workshop, Notes, Nov. 17, 2009.
[241] Wacam workshop, Personal Notes, Health Services Worker's Union of Ghana Hospitality Centre, Tema, Ghana, November 18, 2009; H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.

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Constitution, there is no mention of the organization as being an NGO.[242] While government

lacks the means to do everything for the people, NGOs are simply a tool to compliment what the

government is unable to do.[243] DWM's status as an NGO seems to be more of a means to obtain

funding and proceed with development objectives than an indication of the organizations' belief

in the importance and sustainability of NGOs in development.

DWM views their role as collaborating with other NGOs and with government to help

develop the country and to compliment what the government is doing. DWM executives at

different levels work to mobilize the population at the grassroots and work to educate women to

be politically aware. According to their Constitution, DWM's role is not to act as

representatives, but to provide a "channel for women's views and problems and needs to become

known to government and other state agencies, and work together for solutions.[244]"

Accordingly, DWM seems to aim to act more as 'substitutive'-type representatives, directly

bringing women's voices to government (at least in theory).

DWM views their role as a local NGO differently from that of international NGOs.

Madame Rawlings endorsed more collaboration among NGOs in Ghana, but criticized the role

that many international NGOs play in the country:

> "A lot of NGOs from the Western countries come here and think
> that they are fighting our governments. It's a crazy thing. You are
> here to come and help, to come and collaborate, not come and
> fight. If the government is going wrong then draw their attention
> to it, you understand, but don't come here with the sole objective

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[242] December 31st Women's Movement, *December 31st Women's Movement Programme of Work* and *December 31st Women's Movement Constitution,* 1984.
[243] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.
[244] December 31st Women's Movement, December 31st Women's Movement Constitution 1984, (Accra: December 31st Women's Movement, 1984): 2

of 'we know better, we are coming to do things better than you, and therefore we have nothing to do with you.[245]'"

As exemplified above, the discourse of the organization seems to relate significantly to the revolutionary past of the organization,[246] and is aimed against 'Western' and international influences in the country. Madame Rawlings sees international influence as having had an effect on how women are now demanding microcredit loans instead of cooperative loans, but believes that there are some benefits to this, such as the ability to have more time for individual projects rather than attending cooperative meetings and working away from the home in a cooperative: "Yes, a lot of the individualism that has come into the country has been partly international influence, because we are very communal people. We like to do things together but they have come and pumped this into our heads you know.[247]" She still believes that cooperation and solidarity among community members are important for development, because money made in cooperatives can easily be used in social projects that benefit the whole community rather than just individual members.[248]

NGO Work in Practise

Participation by the different levels of executives within DWM involves setting meeting dates and times as well as the agendas for the meetings. Madame Rawlings explained that the representatives at different levels would choose topics to discuss because 'they are the ones that know' what is going on at the various levels and what the concerns are that need to be addressed.[249]

.[245] Nana K. Agyeman Rawlings, Interview by the author, DWM Office, Accra, Ghana, November 24th, 2009.
[246] The organizational constitution states that DWM was formed based on the ideals of democratic centralism.
[247] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.

Apart from meetings held at the different organizational levels, participation by the people in the events that I attended for this research seemed to mainly involve the national DWM leadership teaching the community members about what they do and how to get involved.[250] DWM works to educate women politically, and to "demystify the issue of governance and politics so that you can make an informed choice.[251]" Teaching is generally done by the organization to the people at the events. Speeches at these events were also given to lobby for certain NDC candidates[252], and Madame Rawlings was actively involved in speaking with community members who were interested in running for political positions, offering her advice and support.[253] In DWM's case, 'teaching' during speeches was more of a means to mobilize people and encourage grassroots participation in political activity (albeit only with the NDC party) rather than teaching as 'sharing of facts' by 'experts' to community members, as was the case with most NGOs in the International/Elite Initiated NGO category.

Participation and Responsiveness in Representation: Input Mechanisms, Physical and Social Distance and Accessibility

As discussed in Chapter Four, participation from the grassroots—for the purposes of this research—requires that the people are able to have input into development initiatives, and be a part of the decision making process at all levels and on a continuing basis. This requires that the NGOs have mechanisms in place to respond to the population, and people at the grassroots are able to access the NGO in order to provide input. Taking Hannah Pitkin's view of effective representation, NGOs acting as representatives at higher policy levels must have access to input

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[250] Tour with DWM, Personal Notes, Kade district, Eastern Region, Kwaibribrim, Asoum, Manya Krobo, and Winneba, Ghana, November 19, 20, and 25th, 2009.
[251] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.
[252] Tour with DWM, Notes.
[253] Ibid.

from the actors they are representing, in order to "act in the interest of the represented, in a way that is responsive to them.[254]"

Responsiveness not only requires concrete mechanisms to access people at the grassroots, but a certain proximity to the people in order to consistently acquire input. Proximity in this case should be both 'physical' and 'social.' Physical proximity is necessary to consistently obtain input, but social distance is also likely to affect the type of input received. NGO staffs from different social classes or speaking different languages are likely to get different input/information from people at the grassroots than those of the same class, background, or who speak the same language.[255] Differences in social position between the NGO staffs and community members create social distance, especially due to the operation of power inherent in these positions.[256] Decreased social distance should allow an NGO to access accurate input from people at the grassroots, as well as making people at the grassroots feel more comfortable approaching the NGO with input (including problems and ideas).

The following section looks at the mechanisms (formal or informal) by which the NGOs are able to access input at the community or grassroots level. This is followed by a look at the physical and social distance between the NGOs and grassroots actors by assessing whether the NGOs are elites or drawn from the communities they 'represent', the direct physical proximity of the organizations to the communities they works with, and whether the NGOs are 'socially' accessible to community members.

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[254] Pitkin, Representation, 209.
[255] David Good, "Social Distance"; Boraa and Hausendorf, "Participation and Beyond," 616.
[256] Lammers et al., "Power Increases Social Distance," 282.

International/Elite Initiated NGOs

The elite/outside initiated NGOs generally lacked formal mechanisms to access the grassroots on a deep and ongoing basis. This does not mean that they had no mechanisms in place to gain input, but the mechanisms that existed were generally to assess the current programs that the NGO was running (monitoring and reviews of the programs, and/or planning for specific projects), rather than gain general input from the communities on their needs or issues that they believed should be at the forefront of the development agenda.[257] CARE's literature addresses the problem of accountability in advocacy work, but their response is simply to attempt to measure the success rates within their programs and obtain feedback on the efficacy of their programs. They argue that it is important that those "affected by emergencies really do have a say in planning, implementing and judging our response. To ensure this is happening and improve our performance by learning, CARE measures outcomes and changes that take place in people's lives as a result of our work through a series of monitoring activities.[258]" As described above, most of the NGOs went into an area with a particular mandate, which had been decided prior to their arrival in the area. Local stakeholders are generally not involved at the very beginning of the planning process.

All of the NGOs in this category worked with partners to gain access to and work with people at the grassroots. CARE for example works with approximately seventy partners in the three country programs that the Ghana office manages. CARE does not do direct

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[257] One exception is how the SDO tracks issues that are brought up by children in their programs. SDO uses this information to decide what areas need to be addressed in the future in their programs, based on whether many children seem to be bringing up specific issues that are not already a part of their programs. Since SDO only works with children however, this information is not used to directly involve people in the planning process for their programs, but rather to maintain the relevance of their programs and topics.

[258] CARE, "Accountability," Accessed May 10th, 2012 at: http://www.care-international.org/Accountability/

implementation of projects, but offers resources to these partners (which are mainly local NGOs) to implement projects in their own communities. Working solely with partners demonstrates a lack of direct access to the grassroots level. Only SDO (in this category) uses volunteers that work in their own communities so that they are able to remain closer to the grassroots.[259]

NGOs often choose to work with partners in order to be more effective at reaching out to broader numbers at the grassroots level. One NGO explained that international NGOs have the 'money, resources, and structures,' whereas local NGOs know the 'terrain' but lack the resources and therefore need international NGOs to help to build their capacity.[260] Partners are typically invited to hear about the NGO and decide whether they would like to participate in implementation of the NGOs' development initiatives. Partners may share in the planning process, in some cases helping to identify areas to work in, within the community. When choosing partners to work with, for example, AAG goes into communities and does what they refer to as 'community animation.' This is a process in which AAG would enter the community (which has been identified as particularly poor and excluded by baseline information obtained through the district assemblies or regional coordinating councils) and discuss with them who AAG is, what they do, and why they are there. Through this process they identify partners to work with in the area, and based on the community animation process the partners decide whether they would like to work with AAG.[261] In this decision-making process however, there are usually pre-chosen thematic areas within which the NGO and their partners must work, limiting the freedom of decision-making available to the NGO's partners and/or community

[259] Anonymous, SDO, Interview.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ohemeng-Agyei, Interview.

members. Local 'planning' and participation often therefore take the form of 'fitting' local ideas and projects into the 'boxes' of the thematic areas chosen by the NGO. CARE for example builds the capacity of local NGOs by giving them funding, explaining the projects on which they will work, and teaching them how to implement these projects. "We [CARE] give them the scope of the work and then the funds.[262]"

As explained above, although some of the NGOs (CDD and CPC) lacked mechanism to directly access input from the grassroots, gaining input or mobilizing people to participate in development initiatives was not in their mandates. These organizations had clear organizational goals and mandates, viewing themselves as experts in their fields. From Pitkin's perspective, these NGOs were acting only as 'trustee'-type representatives (acting—in their expert opinions—in the best interest of the represented). These NGOs do conduct research at the grassroots level to assess development outcomes and (especially in the case of the CDD and CPC) gauge participation in the political process, but seem to have little interest in accessing qualitative grassroots viewpoints.[263]

All of the elite/outside initiated NGOs had their head offices in Accra, making it difficult for many of the people they work with in their programs to access the main offices, or vice versa, for staffs to access poor and marginalized peoples (who are more often in rural areas). The larger NGOs (AAG and CARE) did have offices in smaller centres; increasing their physical proximity to the people that they work with. With the main offices in Accra (all located in

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[262] Kojo Ansah and Mercy Kwafia, Interview by the author, CARE international office, Accra, Ghana, November 24th, 2009.
[263] I say 'qualitative' viewpoints here because the CDD is a leader in conducting the Afrobarometer study in Ghana. They are therefore able to use the research from this study to gauge needs at the grassroots level. However the questions in this study are very limited and meant for quantitative use, and therefore lack the depth necessary for true participation or input into development programs according to this author.

'upscale' areas), far away from the people that the NGOs were working with and attempting to 'represent,' and the elite background of most staffs, there seemed to be significant social distance between these NGOs and the 'poor and marginalized.' This distance decreases possibilities that grassroots actors will approach and access the NGO to provide input.

All of the NGOs staffs in this group are domestic or international elites with very high education levels compared to the average Ghanaian (all of the staffs held University degrees and many hold Master's degrees or PhDs, many from the U.K. or the United States). All of the main offices for these NGOs are located in Accra, meaning that all of the central office staffs live in Accra. Within the NGOs that have offices in smaller centres (AAG, CARE), value consensus seemed to vary widely within the elite/international initiated organizations, and with AAG in particular, there was a clear difference in discourse between staff members in Accra and rural areas.[264]

'Grassroots-Initiated' NGOs: Wacam

Before Wacam was even formed, they organized a meeting with the farmers to discuss what problems were affecting them.[265] Since then, Wacam has made efforts as an organization to not simply go into the communities and teach them, but to learn from them as well. A Wacam employee in Tarkwa explains: "You should tap their [the community members'] experiences because they have cultures with long time experiences, so these are some of the things you should tap from them. As you ask them questions, you should also ask them about their own experiences.[266]"

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[264] Ohemeng-Agyei, Interview; and Christina Amachi, Interview with the author, Accra: Ghana, December 4th, 2009.
[265] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.
[266] Ahorney, Interview.

Wacam's senior staff members run the organization out of their home in Tema, a major centre just outside of the capital, as well as from the founder's office in Accra (from his paying job), in the Trade Union Congress (TUC). Outside of Accra they have an office in Tarkwa—the hub of gold mining in the Western Region—where they have two full time staff members. Staffs from this office travel on a weekly basis to nearby villages to 'mobilize' communities and inform them of Wacam's work in the area.

Wacam is often approached by community members seeking help, demonstrating accessibility to people at the grassroots. After Wacam became known in the Tarkwa area, communities started coming to them with their problems rather than Wacam going out to the communities to mobilize them.[267] One Wacam volunteer from a small village outside of Tarkwa explained that their community had gone to Wacam for help after they felt that they were being mistreated by the mining company: "So that is it, they [the mining company] are always cheating us, so at the time we went to Wacam office and we lodged a complaint to them. And they said that if we can stand on our own two feet and take the company to court, they will help us.[268]" In this case, Wacam was approached by the Teberebie Concerned Farmer's Association for help in matters relating to the mining company. This demonstrates to some degree the communities' comfort in approaching the NGO and their views of Wacam as an organization that is responsive to their needs.[269] Wacam staff members are all Ghanaians who have been

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[267] Ahorney, Interview; H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.

[268] Amoateng, Interview, 20.

[269] In this instance that Wacam demonstrates close ties to the 'grassroots,' responsiveness to their needs and demands in a way that does not necessarily encroach on the communities' decision-making power, and a certain level of legitimacy and trustworthiness as an organization in the eyes of certain community members. It is interesting to note that Wacam does not distribute money directly to the communities or 'build' anything to improve the communities. This is an important distinction that should be made between Wacam and other NGOs. It is clear that if an NGO is distributing money or other resources, it is less significant that community members would be

educated locally, and have joined the organization because of the effects they have seen from mining activities in their home towns or villages. A significant aspect of Wacam's ability to reach people at the 'grassroots' is their ability and willingness to hold workshops and distribute material in Twi.[270] Their community training manual however, is printed in English.

NGO with Political Party Roots: DWM

DWM's structure is similar to that of a mass organization or a political party, comprised of zone, branch, district, regional, and national executives who live in their respective areas where they represent their 'constituents.'[271] By relying on a hierarchical organizational structure, DWM is also able to have consistent connections to the 'grassroots.' Responsiveness in representation can proceed from their hierarchical structure, as long as they utilize this structure to be responsive to the people at the grassroots. Through this structure, DWM national executives are able to have ties to all levels of the organization. These different levels meet on a regular basis, and meetings are arranged by the various level executives. "Some meet once every month, some meet once every two months, some meet once every three months, we meet all the executives once every quarter.[272]"

DWM demonstrated responsiveness to demands at the grassroots in the style of aid that they provide. Madame Rawlings explained that in the past most of the aid distributed through

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drawn to them and seek out their help, or that community organizations would choose to partner with them (as in the case of the international NGOs). Since Wacam does not distribute any monetary resources to communities, the fact that communities go to them for help and volunteer their time with the organization demonstrates a greater degree of community involvement in the organization and 'grassroots' participation for non-monetary rewards. It is also significant to note that distributing monetary resources is a form of power. Since Wacam does not distribute monetary resources, this may help explain a decreased social distance between Wacam and community members since power discrepancies increase social distance between actors.

[270] Mensah-Pah, Interview by the author; Wacam workshop, Notes, Nov. 17, 2009.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.

DWM used to go predominantly to cooperatives set up by the women. Today, the women are asking for their own capital to start their own businesses, so DWM is looking at microcredit loans rather than organizing all of the women into cooperatives as they did in the past.[273]

DWM's main office is in Accra, in an 'upscale' neighbourhood, and the president of DWM (Madame Rawlings) is clearly an elite compared to the average Ghanaian. However, DWM's hierarchical structure means that those involved with DWM at the various lower levels are people that come directly from the communities they work with. Although her elite status would seem to limit accessibility for the average person at the grassroots, Madame Rawlings demonstrated accessibility and responsiveness to community members in her willingness to meet with community members who made appointments with her and came to her office in Accra. I observed this many times while waiting for appointments that I had with DWM. Community members (both men and women) would come from their villages to bring problems to Madame Rawlings, and many would come without appointments expecting to see her and she would very often end up meeting with them at the end of the day.[274] This was something that I did not observe with any other NGOs besides Wacam, and it demonstrated to some degree an unexpected lack of social distance between DWM and community members, as well as the community members' belief in DWM's approachability and ability to respond to their needs.

Donors: The Main Source of Constraints on NGOs? An Analysis Based on CIDA

In order to investigate the possibility that NGOs are being constrained in the type of participation and representation they are able to provide at the grassroots by their donors, it is necessary to look at what types of practises donors promote. If donors are constraining the type

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[273] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.
[274] DWM Field Notes, DWM Office, Accra, Ghana, November 24, 2009.

of participation that NGOs are able to promote at the grassroots, it is important to look at how donors view participation, as well as what they expect and demand from NGO partners. The next section will therefore begin with a focus on the activities of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Ghana.[275] Following this there will be an investigation into what each NGO must do in order to procure funds and their views of donor constraints, which will be analyzed in the following chapter to determine the effects this has on their effectiveness in promoting participation and acting as representatives at the grassroots level.

In the 2008-2009 fiscal year, CIDA provided CDN$99 million in aid to Ghana as a country of focus.[276] CIDA staff specifically expressed the necessity for grassroots participation and input into development initiatives, the importance of getting feedback from the population and the importance of building political consciousness, and that the best way to achieve this is by 'going back and forth, educating people and getting feedback from them.[277]'

CIDA is accountable to the Canadian government to maintain funding and staff expressed the challenges they face in matching up Canadian government policies with development programs that CIDA is already funding or running in Ghana. CIDA receives funding in Ghana for specific priorities that the government in Canada sets. At the time of the interview, the CIDA Ghana program was dealing with how to effectively 'fit' the programs that they were currently

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[275] Two of the participating NGOs in this study are considered key CIDA partners in Ghana (From Ghana: CIDA Report, accessed on May 1st, 2012 at http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUImages/Countries-of-Focus/$file/10-045-Ghana-E.pdf). In 2009, as part of Canada's new aid effectiveness agenda, Ghana was selected by CIDA as a country of focus. "CIDA's program in Ghana builds on efforts already being undertaken by the Government of Ghana to... enhance public participation in the *development* and assessment *of government plans and policies* [Italics added].(From Ghana: Thematic Focus, CIDA, accessed on May 1st, 2012 at http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/JUD-124141510-QL7)."

[276] Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Chapter 8—Strengthening Aid Effectiveness—Canadian International Development Agency," 2009 Fall Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons, (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009): 7, accessed at http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/parl_oag_200911_08_e.pdf

[277] Anonymous, CIDA Interview.

running into the three new thematic priorities that had been set out in the recent Canadian official

development assistance (ODA) bill.[278] Under the new bill CIDA can only support actors who

fall under three thematic areas. These are: 1) Food and Agriculture; 2) Sustainable economic

growth; and 3) Youth and Children. CIDA in Ghana however, has been told to focus their work

in one or two of the thematic areas instead of all three.[279] They must therefore look at areas that

are most closely aligned with the programs that they are currently running, and 'fit' these

programs into the ODA 'boxes.' CIDA staff complained that the Canadian policies are not the

best fit for what their programs are doing in Ghana, so reporting is very challenging.[280]

One area that is not covered under the current ODA bill is a commitment to a rights based

approach to development. CIDA staff explained that there is a clear focus in the ODA bill on

'doing no harm' rather than taking a rights based approach that would highlight, for example, the

'right to a healthy environment.' The UN agencies are pushing for a rights based approach but

Canada does not support this position due to the 'situation' with sovereignty rights in Canada,

highlighting the importance of politics to development assistance.[281]

Despite these priorities, CIDA Ghana has been able to support the RAVI project (Rights and

Voices Initiative), even though this project has a clear focus on the 'rights based approach' to

development. With RAVI, the focus for CIDA is on aid effectiveness, which was a priority in

the ODA bill. The priority for CIDA Ghana in the RAVI project was to get different civil

society actors and organizations to begin working together.

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[278] CIDA, "Canada Introduces a New Effective Approach to its International Assistance," (Toronto: May 20th, 2009), accessed May 9, 2012 at http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/NAT-5208514-G7B
[279] Anonymous, Interview by the author, CIDA-PSU Office, Accra, Ghana, November 30th, 2009.
[280] Anonymous, CIDA, Interview.
[281] Ibid.

CIDA's ability to receive and provide funding to civil society projects is based on their and their partners' abilities to demonstrate aid 'successes.' There is a clear results-based orientation with CIDA policies, requiring a large amount of monitoring and oversight.[282] For example, in the next few years (at the time of research) GRAP (Ghana Research and Advocacy Program[283]) will join with RAVI (the Rights and Voices initiative—a former Wacam sponsor and current CIDA project) and they will be operating under one facility as a five year multi-donor project known as GARI (Ghana Accountability and Responsiveness Initiative). At the time of research however, CIDA was still waiting for the minister's approval to participate in this initiative. If CIDA Ghana does receive approval to fund the GARI project, they will only be able to receive an indicative amount of funding and more funding will only be available after CIDA Ghana can demonstrate that GARI is working.

The extension of RAVI will entail joining it with 'GRAP.' The emphasis for the GRAP project is on supporting civil society organizations at the 'grassroots,' with a focus on those organizations that are consistent with the CIDA's goals in this project. Under GRAP there are opportunities for civil society organizations to apply for core funding twice annually. The ability for civil society to apply for core funding through GRAP was implemented because CSOs had complained that they were spending too much time writing proposals and applying for grants.[284]

The politics of development assistance are also clear in the type of participation CIDA supports. Specifically speaking about women's participation in politics, a CIDA staff member

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[282] Anonymous CIDA Interview.
[283] Anonymous, CIDA Interview. This CIDA staff member states that she cannot remember whether the 'A' in GRAP stands for 'advocacy' or 'accountability.' She explains that the political direction often makes it difficult to get things done. In this case, it has been difficult to decide whether 'advocacy' and/or 'accountability' are words that CIDA should be using.
[284] Anonymous, CIDA Interview.

argued that it is not possible to achieve greater participation by women without going through the political parties. 'Unless the leadership in the party makes space in the party for women, there is very little that donors can do.' Since civil society actors in Ghana vote on party lines, the parties need to insist on women's participation. Later in the same interview however, the staff member insisted that NGOs need to remain non-partisan in their approach.[285] These views are somewhat contradictory, since on one hand she promotes pushing political parties to involve women in politics, but on the other hand she does not think that donors or NGOs should be involved with political parties. The latter is more in line with the official CIDA line, and follows the argument in the literature that donors only fund 'apolitical' or neutral causes.

Another problem described by CIDA staff was a lack of cooperation between NGOs and NGO coalitions. This problem may be linked to their inability to procure 'core' funding, forcing NGOs to compete for scarce development funds. CIDA staff complained of a lack of cooperation among NGOs, and that people and groups often work in isolation. There are 3600 plus registered CSOs in Ghana (from a 2007 statistic), and many different platforms and coalitions.[286]

Donor Priorities, Competition, Demonstrable 'Successes,' and the Politics of Development

International/Elite Initiated NGOs

With the exception of HRAO, all of the NGOs in this category obtain funding by applying for funds through competitive grant processes. When obtained, these funds were granted to be used for specific projects, as outlined in the funding proposal or agreed upon by the donor and NGO. Project based funding limits the ability to have long term coordinated

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[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.

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development plans, since projects and priorities are set based on the ability to secure funding (often on an annual basis).

HRAO is the only NGO that participated that had 'core' funding (funding for the NGO that was not restricted to a particular project) at the time of writing. Without core funding, NGOs are restricted by donors to certain development priorities, and have less flexibility in their use of funds. Kojo Ansah of CARE explains:

> "For example Coca-Cola wants a water and sanitation project, Cargill wants a cocoa project in Ashanti region, or CIDA would want something on a farm, food security or something. It's specific… they would generally name the general [direction] and we'll go to it.[287]"

Although CARE and other NGOs may set certain priorities for their development activities, these decisions need to be tempered by what areas they are able to obtain funding in. SDO staffs specifically complained that donors often set development priorities before they even arrive in an area.

Even though the NGOs must determine their projects based on donor demands and agree on a work plan with the donors, many did not see this as being a constraint on their activities. "We agree with them [the donors] what program, what work plan, what objectives from the beginning. So as to how to implement, it's just according to the work plan, so nobody tells us what to do.[288]"

In order to combat some of the constraints that come with donor funding, two of the NGOs (AAG and SDO) have begun to seek local funding for some initiatives. SDO has begun to look for local funding for some of its projects in Ghana (by seeking sponsorship from larger

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[287] Ansah, Interview, 61.
[288] Ansah and Kwafia, Interview.

corporate organizations within the country); although at the time of this research they had been

unsuccessful in attracting any substantial funding from local sources.[289] In 2008, initiated by

staff members, AAG made efforts to fundraise locally, acquiring USD$4635 in funding.

Although this was an impressive effort, the funds pale in comparison to the 2007 AAG income

of just over five million GB pounds.[290]

Since all of the NGOs (with the exception of HRAO) obtained funds on a temporary

basis through competitive grant writing processes, they were directly or indirectly put in

competition with each other for these funds. SDO staff specifically discussed the current

difficulties in obtaining funding in Ghana, explaining that it is becoming increasingly difficult

for every NGO to attract donors in Ghana due to the fact that statistics are showing

improvements in economic, health, and other indicators and donors are moving to countries with

worse statistics.[291] Only HRAO staff specifically complained about the lack of cooperation that

competing for funding creates among NGOs:

> "NGOs are supposed to be working as a body, but many times
> there is a temptation to compete. You know you are competing for
> resources and things like that, so instead of sharing knowledge and
> trying to build up, which is really my passion, but I have come to
> realize that it doesn't work that way. Everyone is trying to build a
> reputation… and visibility and more resources, and so that affects
> the whole networking business.[292]"

The necessity to compete for funds leads to the concurrent necessity to demonstrate

'tangible' and 'quick' aid successes. Once an NGO procures funding from a donor, there are

constraints on how and where it can be used, as well as strong demands on the resources of

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[289] Anonymous, SDO Interview.
[290] AAG Annual Report 2008, 18, 24.
[291] Anonymous, SDO Interview.
[292] Jay, Interview, 43.

organizations to comply with donor demands for reports, evaluations, contact, and updates for the donors. SDO staff commented that it is necessary for the organization to consistently explain and demonstrate to donors the impact that they are making, and to track the number of people that have been impacted by their programs.[293]

All of the NGOs in this category were adamant about their non-partisanship, even when there were obvious political leanings such as in the case of the CDD. All of the NGO staffs also, when asked about whether their organizations were engaged in 'political' activities, expressed claims of being 'non-political' or politically neutral. As explained above, the politics of development affects the ability of NGOs to procure funding for more 'radical' causes. The NGOs in this category focus their development projects on politically 'neutral' causes or issues that are considered 'legitimate' according to the current development paradigm, and avoid controversial or political issues, which might jeopardize their funding or future funding possibilities. The funding sources for these NGOs includes child sponsorship packages, 'sport,' and other areas widely regarded as 'legitimate' under the current global development discourse, such as human rights. These organizations tended to avoid contentious issues (at least in their public funding 'face') or political/structural causes of poverty.[294] The organizations that did have a more radical language in their literature often had their radical language and plans softened in practise. Although recent AAI literature discusses the necessity for a 're-politicization' of development, the AAG staff members that participated in this research did not

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[293] Anonymous, SDO Interview.

[294] David Billis and Joy MacKeith, "Growth and Change in NGOs: Concepts and Comparative Experience," in eds. Edwards and Hulme, *Making a Difference: NGOs in a Changing World*, (London: Earthscan, 1992): 120. Billis and MacKeith argue that NGOs must focus on 'neutral' subjects to maintain funding from the public. "The sorts of activities that are most helpful and honest are very different from what inspires the public to make donations."

express this view, demonstrating a possible lack of ideological or goal dissemination throughout the organization, in particular to country affiliates.

'Grassroots-Initiated' NGO: WACAM

Wacam founder Daniel Owusu-Koranteng expressed his belief that they have a very good relationship with their current donor (Oxfam America), and this donor has not tried to interfere with Wacam's activities. Wacam works in an area that is much more 'politically charged' than many of the 'elite/outside' initiated NGOs, and their donors must be aware of the controversies that some of their activities create. Newmont Mining Corporation sent letters to Oxfam America at one point complaining about Wacam's work, but Oxfam America was aware of the extent of their work and maintained their funding.[295] Wacam has refused to accept funding from a donor in one instance: after pursuing the donor, Wacam discovered that the donor had been uncomfortable with mining campaigns organized by other organizations like Wacam in their home country, and decided to not accept funding from this donor.[296] Wacam's co-founder explains: "We have very much concern about our independence so when we are going into partnership, we do due diligence. We make sure that the funder gets to know we are a bit controversial, and we want to be free to do our campaigns, so we thrash that out first… And because of that our funding is quite constrained.[297]"

Problems can arise from scepticism towards donors. While Wacam seems to have been successful at pursuing its own agenda and campaigning as the organization sees fit rather than tailoring programs to donor demands, funding has been scarce and staff are not very well paid.

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[295] D. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.
[296] H. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview; D. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview.
[297] D. Owusu-Koranteng, Interview,17-18.

The full time permanent staff members that the organization is able to maintain (Hannah Owusu-Koranteng in Tema and Jerry Mensah-Pah and Lloyd Paul Ahorney in Tarkwa) do not receive any benefits and their salaries are based on the organization receiving funding. One staff member explained that he would stop working for the organization if it was not for his passion for their cause, because he does not have a contract or benefits due to their lack of funding security.[298]

Due to their RAVI funding, Wacam's training programs are run using the 'rights-based approach' to development.[299] Although not mentioned in my interviews with the Wacam staff, this approach is taught to NGOs who receive aid from RAVI (Rights and Voices Initiative). RAVI is a project run by a consortium of two international NGOs and two consulting firms funded by DFID, and has funded and trained Wacam staff members in their methods. While Wacam is very wary of donor constraints on their activities, portions of their funding are dependent on teaching the rights-based approach to development.

Wacam did not complain specifically about competition for funding, although they did discuss the difficulties in acquiring funding. They also did not mention the resources and time required to apply for funding through donor projects such as RAVI, nor the need to demonstrate 'successes' to these donors. However, the RAVI project requires a lengthy application process, and has a clear 'aid effectiveness' agenda requiring a great deal of funding oversight, evaluations, and monitoring of programs.

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[298] Mensah-Pah, Interview.
[299] Ibid.

NGO with Political Party Roots: DWM

DWM has difficulties in obtaining funding from donors. DWM's origins and their ties to former president J.J. Rawlings make it difficult for them to procure donor funding. Although declaring themselves as 'politically neutral' (perhaps mostly in order to try to obtain funding) the organization often proclaimed the 'evils' of the opposing party (the NPP) at both interviews and public events.[300] They have received funding from the Canadian Embassy in the past, but they currently have no funding except at the local level. This local funding comes mainly from private members and member fees which can then be redistributed as credit to community members for projects.[301] Perhaps because of this inability to obtain funding, DWM is very critical of donors in development. Madame Rawlings explains that she believes that many NGOs are doing 'political' work, but they all claim to be 'apolitical' and the donors "look the other way and then give them the money.[302]"

At the time of writing, DWM received all of their funding from members and membership fees and therefore technically have independence in their ability to set priorities and run programs. Madame Rawlings indirectly discussed the flexibility DWM has in choosing their programs and priorities due to local funding, when she discussed the change in DWM aid being distributed as individual microcredit loans rather than to cooperatives.[303] In this case (discussed above), although DWM itself is not constrained to 'fit' their programs with donor priorities, it is possible that what the people are demanding is affected by what they have seen and come to expect from development programs run by other NGOs and donors.

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[300] Tour with DWM, Note; Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.
[301] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Agyeman Rawlings, Interview.

Madame Rawlings complains that other NGOs (as well as the former government) have tried to prevent DWM from obtaining funding or attending international forums (perhaps because of the competitive funding environment that NGOs work within) by writing letters to donors and to the UN complaining that DWM is just a political group.[304]

Madame Rawlings explains that some NGOs do ask to collaborate with DWM, but it is mostly because of her capacity to attract large numbers of people to gatherings. "If they are doing something [other NGOs] and they need numbers they invite me because they know that if they invite me I will invite my people and then they'll have a full room.[305]" This was obvious during an event that I attended with DWM (organized by another NGO) for 'international day against violence against women.' There were many speeches during the event, but it was clear that when Madame Rawlings got up to speak that a large portion of the people in attendance were there to listen to her speak.[306] Collaboration and cooperation with other NGOs was noted in this instance to be more of a means to an end for the NGOs themselves than an exercise in cooperation and solidarity among aid organizations to achieve shared development goals.

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[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Tour with DWM, Field Notes, Winneba, Ghana, November 25th, 2009.

CHAPTER SIX: FACTORS AFFECTING GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Drawing on the previous chapter, it is possible to pull out a few reasons why NGOs are unable to act as effective representatives and promote effective participation at the grassroots level. Four possible factors that are evident in the case study are: the effects of organizational 'roots,' distance (both physical and social) to grassroots actors, organizational ideology/philosophy, and donor control. These four factors will be revisited in this section in light of the case studies, with consideration to how the literature approaches these topics.

Organizational Roots and Philosophy behind the Formation of the NGO

The actions of NGOs are affected by the organizational roots and the reasoning behind the formation of the organization. Following Vieira and Runciman,[307] the way organizations act to the represented depends on the type of organization: member based organizations act more as substitutive-type representatives and non-member based organizations generally follow corporate models, acting more as trustee-type representatives.[308] Streeten also argues that organizational goals affect the type of participation they can promote.[309]

As more of a member-based organization, and with political origins, the DWM is an obvious example of an NGO that follows a substitutive-type representational role. With their origins as an 'association of communities,' Wacam also seems to act more as a member based organization than the other NGOs that were involved in this study: Wacam works through

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[307] Monica Brito Vieira and David Runciman, 103-107.
[308] Referring back to Pitkin's analysis of the different types of representation, 'trustee' type representatives view themselves as experts acting in the best interest of the people, whereas 'substitutive' type representatives view themselves as community members acting as substitutes for the people (acting as they believe the people would act if they were present).
[309] Paul Streeten, "NGOs and Development", 200- 201.

community volunteers for much of its projects, and all of the staff joined the organization first as volunteers.

Only Wacam and DWM stood out in their ability to access people at the 'grassroots' outside of partners or 'formal,' higher capacity local organizations. Both Wacam and DWM had clear mechanisms through which community members could come to them with their problems and speak directly to staff and senior staff members. DWM has clear mechanisms to access the voice of individual community members at the 'grassroots' through their hierarchal structure of representation from the local up to the national organizational level which facilitates access to the 'grassroots.' Wacam was also able to access the 'voice' of the people at the grassroots. Unlike most other NGOs in this study, they did not invite representatives from local NGOs or CBOs, but worked instead with representatives chosen by and from the communities themselves. Wacam staff members and volunteers were also generally much closer to the 'grassroots' than the staffs of the other participating organizations: all of the Wacam staff and volunteers joined the organization because of their negative experiences with the mining companies in their home areas.

A clear difference between DWM and Wacam and the other participating NGOs is their organizational roots. As discussed in the case studies, both of these organizations began with the goal of being social movements rather than NGOs. These roots seem to have a significant impact on the NGOs' proximity to the grassroots and approachability. NGOs with social movement roots that maintain grassroots volunteers have more 'built in' access mechanisms and more consistent ties to people at the grassroots level. According to Mansbridge, participatory democracy requires common interests. Having staffs drawn from the communities that they work in (as in the case with Wacam) creates immediate bonds of common interest, and ties to

these communities. Although not formed at the grassroots level, DWM's political structural roots offer greater ability to maintain access and ties to the grassroots level due to their member-base and hierarchy of community representatives.

Representation with accountability also requires the knowledge of to whom to air grievances, but also the approachability for people to feel comfortable airing those grievances.[310] If there is representation or advocacy without the ability to 'air grievances', there is no accountability in representation.[311] As discussed in the previous section, I witnessed community members coming to air grievances at both DWM and Wacam offices, but not at any of the other NGO offices that participated in this study. As the former first lady of Ghana, Madame Rawlings, is clearly an elite compared to the average Ghanaian, coming from a very different social class and background. Although Madame Rawlings' status would seem to imply greater social distance to grassroots community members, this did not seem to be the case. Community members still seemed to feel comfortable going to the DWM office to ask to speak with Madame Rawlings and 'air their grievances.'

Wacam and DWM's ability to respond to people at the grassroots may be related to their positions as national NGOs, but this explanation seems insufficient to explain their greater ability to be available to individuals at the 'grassroots' since the CDD is also a national NGO, and AAG is a national affiliate of AAI. It is possible that the structures of these organizations, and the reason for their formation—created to be more 'social movement' type organizations with local roots—means that they maintain a more traditionally Ghanaian structure that is more familiar and accessible to the average Ghanaian at the 'grassroots.' The roots of these NGOs likely

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[310] Ninsin, "Markets," 100-101.
[311] Vieira and Runciman, Representation, 154-162.

decreases the perception of social distance and allows for greater familiarity (especially in comparison to international NGOs), making individual community members comfortable coming to DWM and Wacam to 'air their grievances' much more easily than with any of the other NGOs that participated in this research. This is not to claim however that DWM and Wacam necessarily respond to these needs, but only that they have clearer mechanisms in place to access the 'voices' of the average person at the 'grassroots' and therefore the potential to respond and bring these voices to higher policy levels.

Effective representation and participation also require a clear vision of the representative functions and the type of participation that the NGO is attempting to achieve. Throughout organizations, there is often a lack of clarity as to what participation entails.[312] In order to promote effective participation, all levels of staffs—including senior staffs and donor agencies—need to be directly involved and committed to what participation really means according to the organization. In other words, the will for participation needs to exist at all levels of the organization.[313]

Although most NGOs and their staffs give lip service to grassroots participation,[314] the reality of implementation is quite different than talking about it. As was visible in the previous chapter, for many of the organizations there was a difference between what they were attempting to do and what they were actually doing on the ground. Veltmeyer and Petras complain about

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[312] Long, *Participation of the Poor*, 154.
[313] Ibid, 154.
[314] AAG, CARE, and HRAO Interviews. Also see Carolyn Long, for the importance of promoting grassroots participation in development initiatives.

this problem, arguing that many NGOs use the discourse of grassroots development but act in a way that promotes 'apolitical self-exploitation.[315]'

One of the possible reasons for this difference may be a lack of ideological dissemination or value consensus throughout the organization. While the NGO leadership may have certain priorities and goals, if these are not disseminated well throughout the organization (and there is not sufficient staff 'buy-in' to the ideas as well), it is unlikely that the outcomes on the ground will match the goals.

It is important in this case to look at the staff background, and their reasons for joining the organization. Van Rooy[316] argues that the reasoning for staff joining NGOs is often good pay, benefits, etc. Wacam stands out as a clear exception to Van Rooy's argument. Wacam has few resources, and as a small organization, very little opportunity for upward mobility. One of the staff members specifically complained that the pay was very bad and that there were no benefits, but that he joined the organization because he believed in the cause and would have left were it not for his strong belief in the importance of what they were doing. Although this situation is clearly not desirable, it demonstrates the staff members' commitment to the cause and the principles of the organization, rather than to their job as a financial opportunity. Achieving consistent value consensus throughout the organizational staff is obviously more difficult in larger organizations, and more difficult to judge when staffs are hired in a competitive hiring process rather than joining the organization as volunteers. In this case, the NGOs that

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[315] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 128. 'Apolitical Self-Exploitation' refers to the necessity for NGOs and the communities they work with in development initiatives to remain (or appear to remain) politically 'neutral.' According to Veltmeyer and Petras, this leads to a form of 'self-exploitation' since the communities are driven to participate in implementation of development initiatives without the formulation of alternative political theory that would allow them to challenge the structural causes of poverty. See also Amin, *New Social Movements*.
[316] Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 51.

were not initiated as NGOs (i.e. that began more as social movement organizations—Wacam and DWM) are more likely to attract value-driven staffs who believe in and are more apt to effectively promote the organization's mission and values.

Physical and Social Distance

As discussed in the previous chapter, physical and social distance from the NGO to the grassroots is likely to play a role in their ability to access input from grassroots actors. No access to input from the grassroots and a lack of the ability and willingness of grassroots actors to approach the NGO inevitably result in a lack of accountability in representation and the absence of real participation. The following section will analyze the effects of the NGOs' physical and social distance to the communities that they are attempting to impact.

The problem of physical distance from grassroots actors was not discussed thoroughly in any of the literature that I reviewed, except to argue that many NGOs use partners to access the grassroots.[317] Using partners implies that these NGOs are not actually physically active at the grassroots themselves. Authors such as Gina Porter[318] argue that NGOs are usually staffed by urban elites, who come from and live in the city, and are out of touch with what is happening in rural areas where many of the NGO programs are run.[319] Although all of the NGOs that participated in this study have their head offices in Accra, four of the eight NGOs do have offices in more remote areas where they are closer to the people they are advocating for.

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[317] For example see: Giles Mohan, "The Disappointments of Civil Society: The Politics of NGO Intervention in Northern Ghana." *Political Geography* 21, (2002): 143; Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 66; Maina, "Kenya," 162, 136; Abeles, "RethinkingNGOs," 243.

[318] Gina Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World: Perspectives from Ghana," *Progress in Development Studies* 3, no.2 (2003): 139.

[319] Abeles, "RethinkingNGOs," 249; Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 128; Shivji, *Silences in NGO Discourse*, 30-31.

Returning to Mansbridge, government representatives can easily lose touch with their constituents because they end up spending the majority of their time dealing with other legislators.[320] This argument can be extended to NGOs, who end up spending more time with donors (trying to acquire funding), other NGOs (for example at forums), and international actors or government (trying to advocate for their causes) and losing touch with their 'constituents' at the grassroots level.

Many of the participating NGOs discussed their participation in NGO forums. There was a clear desire to coordinate with other NGOs, and this takes time and resources. The NGOs were attempting to work together more frequently and avoid unnecessary repetition of programs. However, many of the participating NGOs lack clear and consistent mechanisms to access the grassroots (as discussed in the previous chapter). Due to the discrepancies in time spent with national and international policy makers and other NGOs compared to the time spent consulting the opinions of their 'constituents' at the 'grassroots' (rather than just educating people at the grassroots), the NGOs seem likely to fall prey to Mansbridge's problem of losing touch with their constituents. As discussed in the previous chapter, only DWM and Wacam seem to have mechanisms in place and the social 'proximity' to consistently maintain ties with informal groups and community members at the 'grassroots.'

The problem of NGOs and civil society actors lacking physical proximity to the grassroots was discussed by community members at a forum on the Ghanaian oil project, organized by Publish What You Pay.[321] The forum was open to civil society actors (including

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[320] Mansbridge, *Democracy*, 235-243.
[321] "Publish What You Pay (PWYP) is a global network of civil society organizations that are united in their call for oil, gas and mining revenues to form the basis for development and improve the lives of citizens in resource-rich countries. PWYP undertakes public campaigns and policy advocacy to achieve disclosure of information about

individual community members) and organized to discuss the oil project's environmental impacts and whether civil society had been properly consulted in the environmental impact assessment. Those present agreed that public participation in the assessments was very low. Although the oil company had had "33 meetings with stakeholders", those present at the forum argued that these were only meetings with NGOs, not community members. They argued that it is unfair to assume that NGOs represent the people. Some forum members even went as far as to criticize the forum itself, since it was held in Accra rather than locations that would be affected by the oil project.

As discussed above, NGOs generally work with partners at the grassroots rather than directly accessing community members. Within these NGO-local partner relationships, authors such as Mohan argue that NGOs often act in a patronizing way towards their partners.[322] In accordance with Mohan's argument, many of the NGO staffs involved in the study seemed to view themselves as superior to their partners at the grassroots. Their views of themselves as 'experts' (as explained above) who had to 'teach' people at the grassroots exemplifies this view.

NGOs often only partner with 'credible' or formal organizations at the grassroots level.[323] NGOs work with partners as their 'link' to the voice of the people who are generally formal groups organized in a way that international NGOs are familiar with, and exclude informal groups or those that operate in a non 'Western' style. All of the NGOs that participated in this research discussed specifically working with partners that included local 'civil society'

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extractive industry revenues and contracts." From Publish What You Pay, "About," accessed on April 2nd, 2012 at: http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org/about

[322] Mohan, "Dissapointments of Civil Society," 143.

[323] Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 66.

organizations, local NGOs, and local 'community-based' organizations.[324] Often due to budget

and time constraints, the NGOs (with the exception of Wacam and DWM) chose to work with

organizations that already had some capacity, met certain standards set by the NGO, and were

seen as 'credible' by the NGO with which they were potentially partnering. These criteria

definitely set limits on the types of people that the NGOs were accessing at the 'grassroots.' By

focussing only on 'credible' organizations with a certain set of capacities, the NGOs were

limited to organizations that, as the literature suggested,[325] were organized in a similar fashion to

international NGOs and followed an organizational structure with which the NGOs were

familiar. The process to choose partners to work with also limits the types of partners with

which the NGOs are able to work, since the process to choose partners is often so long and

demanding of resources that only well established organizations that already have funding are

potentially able to participate in the competitive process to become a partner.

Social distance or a differentiation in social position between the NGOs and the

grassroots is evident in the fact that NGOs tend to be staffed by urban elites.[326] The great

majority of participating NGO staffs are from the middle class or are highly educated elites

compared to the average citizen.[327] Some of them are foreign nationals, and many of the

Ghanaian citizens working for the organizations had received higher education in Europe or

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[324] SDO discussed working with individual community members (i.e. teachers) in workshops as well as gaining information about problems at the 'grassroots' by tracking the types of issues that participants in their programs bring up in group discussions. AAG also works with individual community members in their training programs on the Mining and Minerals Act.

[325] Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 66; Maina, "Kenya," 162, 136; Abeles, "RethinkingNGOs," 243.

[326] For literature that refers to NGO staffs as elites see: Van Rooy and Robinson, "Out of the Ivory Tower," 51; Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 128; Shivji, *Silences in NGO Discourse*, 30-31; and Gina Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World," 139.

[327] Donna Pankhurst, "Globalization and Democracy: International Donors and Civil Society in Zimbabwe," In ed. Zack-Williams et al., *Africa in Crisis: New Challenges and Possibilities*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002): 115.

North America. All of the senior staffs from the organizations that participated in the research have Master's degrees, either from a foreign University or from the University of Ghana. The senior staff members of these organizations are therefore very highly educated compared to the average Ghanaian citizen that they are working with at the 'grassroots.'

The exceptions were the Wacam staffs, in which case the difference likely lies in the fact that they joined the organization first as volunteers because they came from the affected areas and felt the problems first-hand. This structure may explain why the community members in Tarkwa and surrounding areas seemed to feel comfortable approaching Wacam with their grievances. In contrast to this however, the other organization involved in this study that community members seemed to feel comfortable approaching with grievances was DWM, in which case the senior staffs (and most importantly the president Madame Rawlings) are clearly elites compared to the average Ghanaian. As discussed in the previous chapter, DWM's elite status did not preclude 'approachability' from grassroots actors, demonstrating that elite status alone does not determine social distance.

As discussed above, NGO staff members are generally highly educated elites in Ghanaian society. This may play a significant role in how they interact with people at the 'grassroots.' From a Gramscian perspective, the problem with elites is not only their 'social distance' to the grassroots, but that they cannot help but serve their own interests.

According to Gramsci, even though elites might advocate for the poor and speak the language of 'bottom-up' or participatory development, if they are not drawn from the 'grassroots' their interests are inevitably elite interests. In order for the poor and excluded to gain anything (i.e. power), they must organize and 'struggle' for power from below. In this view, elite initiated NGOs—no matter how altruistic their goals—inevitably serve their own

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class interests. Wacam staffs, drawn from the areas and communities they serve, are more likely

to approach Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' and represent the interests of poor and

marginalized communities.

Another way that social distance is created between NGOs and grassroots actors is

through the use of language. NGOs can make themselves more accessible to the grassroots by

using local languages and speech. If all of the NGO literature, forums, and teaching are

conducted in English, they are only accessible to a small portion of the population. Wacam

seems more inclusive with the types of people that are able to participate in their events, since

their workshops are conducted mainly in Twi (the local language) rather than in English. DWM

also conducts public speeches largely in Twi. Other organizations may also conduct workshops

in Twi periodically however this was not my experience: At one event that I was able to attend

with DWM, there were many other NGOs in attendance (including HRAO) and the president of

DWM was the only NGO representative to conduct her speech in Twi.[328]

Another problem with inaccessibility due to language was evident during the Publish

What You Pay forum on the oil project. Community members went over the environmental

impact assessment and complained that the technical language of the document was inaccessible

to the general population, making it impossible for them to give direct input into their views on

the potential impacts of the project. The fact that the document itself (and all of the meetings) is

communicated in English rather than Twi or any other local languages, also demonstrates a lack

of accessibility for the average Ghanaian.

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[328] Tour with DWM, notes.

As discussed above, social distance was created between the NGOs and grassroots actors through inaccessible language and differences in social status. Social distance in these cases seems to be related to organizational roots because NGOs with roots in the communities that they serve are more likely to maintain accessible or familiar organizational structures and speak the same language (formally and colloquially) as grassroots actors.

Organizational Ideology and Philosophy

In order for grassroots participation to occur in development initiatives, the organizations involved need to be committed to achieving real participation from the grassroots, and open to receiving input from the grassroots.[329] The NGOs' openness to input from the grassroots is important for their roles as advocates for the people at higher policy levels, and affects the type of representation they are able to provide.

The ideology and mission of the organization are likely to have an effect on their commitment to grassroots participation, as well as their views of their role in development, and their awareness of externally imposed constraints on their plans and activities. According to Carolyn Long, an important aspect of the ability to promote grassroots participation in development initiatives is the *will* to promote grassroots participation.[330] This seems simple enough, but for many organizations the discourse of grassroots participation may exist without an underlying will or goal of grassroots participation. However, even if the commitment to grassroots participation exists within the organization, it must be disseminated at all levels of the

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[329] Carolyn Long, *Participation of the Poor in Development Initiatives: Taking Their Rightful Place*, (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2001): 127.

[330] Long, *Participation of the Poor*, 127. Although Carolyn Long is referring to donors in this case, this research found very similar situations with some of the participant NGOs.

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organization so that all actors within the organization share this commitment.[331] Streeten's

argument that the type of participation promoted is affected by the organization's goals[332] seems

salient here since both DWM and Wacam began without the goal of being an NGO, and both

seem to have more avenues for popular participation than the other NGOs involved in the study.

This research finds that NGOs generally view themselves as and act as 'experts' in

specific areas of development. "With greater access to education and resources, NGO staff act

as experts who apply development paradigms constructed internationally to local projects in the

'global South.[333]'" As explained above, these 'experts' often bring their expertise to government

and policy makers in order to fulfill what they view as their role in advocating for the poor.

Hannah Pitkin highlights one potential effect of NGOs viewing themselves as experts: if

the NGO views political issues as 'cut-and dry', and representatives as 'experts', then the less

likely they are to feel the necessity to consult with the people to make decisions.[334] The CDD is

a particularly good example of Pitkin's argument, viewing themselves as 'experts', and political

issues as objective 'facts' even when they are clearly taking a political standpoint on some

issues: seeing themselves as neutral in political issues even when they were 'naming and

shaming' people involved in possible 'subversive' activity during the last election, and having

received an award from the last administration, while viewing the current administration with

suspicion (the NPP and NDC respectively).

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[331] Long, *Participation of the Poor*, 129, 162.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability," 726, 731, 737.
[334] Pitkin, *Representation,* 170, 211-212.

With the exception of DWM and Wacam[335] none of the participating NGOs even mentioned 'learning' from the communities rather than just teaching them. As was explained in the previous section, most of the NGOs have very little capacity to access people at the 'grassroots' and respond to their demands.

Drawing further on Pitkin's analysis, most NGOs seem to be acting more as 'trustee'-type representatives, acting as 'experts' in what they believe to be the best interest of those that they represent rather than as 'substitutive'-type representatives (acting as the represented would act if they were present). The CDD, HRAO, and SDO all discussed their specific roles as 'experts' in their fields. Even when NGOs did not specifically refer to themselves as 'experts,' they still discussed their role in educating the masses on specific issues, demonstrating their view that they had a certain 'expertise' that they could share with others.

While much of the literature complained of NGOs usurping the role of government, I found in this research that a lot of the participating NGOs seemed to have more contact with the national government and civil servants than they did with people at the 'grassroots.' In their contact with government (and local civil society organizations) however, they seem to play the same role as they do with people at the grassroots: Providing education and capacity building. Drawing on Rita Abrahamsen's analysis of national 'ownership' of SAPs in *Disciplining Democracy*,[336] I would argue that although NGOs are not overtly setting the policy direction of

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[335] Wacam was also the only organization to specifically discuss the necessity to listen to community members rather than just going in to teach them, although DWM criticized international NGOs for coming into Ghana with the idea that they 'know better.'

[336] Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy,* 134. "The degree of control exerted over many new democracies by donors and creditors… by virtue of Africa's need for development aid runs contrary to key aspects of democracy such as national sovereignty and self-government. Accordingly, the donor community has been has been keen to resist any accusation of undue influence over domestic policy choices, and has eagerly promoted the notion of national 'ownership' of SAPs. 'Ownership' implies that the Bretton Woods Institutions no longer impose policies

aid receiving governments and civil society actors, they are indirectly controlling the policy

agenda through education and support of MPs and officials. By putting their 'superior' or

'expert' knowledge (or that of 'experts' chosen by the NGO) at the disposal of MPs, officials,

and local civil society actors, the NGOs are effectively guiding decisions in specific directions,

even when the policy decisions are made 'autonomously' and 'independently.' When NGOs or

the people that they bring in to provide education are both providing aid and are seen as

'experts,' the people that they are educating are bound to take the information that they provide

as more of a 'truth' than a potential policy choice. The fact that NGOs views of themselves as

experts, paired with organizational philosophies that fail to provide access mechanisms to

grassroots actors, clearly limits the NGOs' abilities to act as effective representatives and

promote deep and broad participation in development.

Donor Control: Top-Down Control, Quick 'Successes,', and Political 'Neutrality'

Donor control is the most commonly cited factor in the literature for why development

actors (such as NGOs) are unable to promote effective grassroots participation.[337] This section

re-examines the elements of donor control that likely have a negative effect on NGOs' abilities

to promote effective participation from the grassroots, in light of the case studies. The four

effects of donor control that emerge from the literature and the Ghana case study that will be

examined in this section are: Top-down control, competition for funding, demands on time and

resources, and the necessity for political neutrality.

on African countries, but merely *put their superior economic knowledge and planning skills at the disposal of governments, who then make an autonomous and independent decision to adopt the suggested policy measures* [my italics]."

[337] See for example Petras (as cited in Hearn, "African NGOs," 1106): NGOs ensure conformity with the "goals, values, and ideology of the donors, as well as the proper use of funds." See also: Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World,"134-136; Mohan, "Dissapointments of Civil Society," 135- 136; Manji, "Collaborations with the South," 78; Platteau, "Pitfalls of Participatory Development", 131-132.

Participation in development initiatives tends to exist mainly in implementation, after decision making has already been done at the donor level.[338] The data from this research suggests that mobilization of marginalized groups was a very common way for NGOs to promote participation at the 'grassroots.' Mobilization for all of these NGOs seemed to mean education on various issues (e.g. human rights, sport for development, the constitution, etc.) but did not include participation in agenda setting. AAG discussed how they 'decide together' with their local partners in what areas to work, but they also explained that they only work in three thematic areas. Therefore although participation meant working together to decide what areas to work in, in the end the decision making is left to the donor NGO (AAG in this case) and the local organizations participate in implementation. This seemed to be a common problem with participation: After the initial attempts at mobilizing the people at the 'grassroots' through education, participation takes the form of implementing the NGO's set program or agenda.

Accordingly, 'participation' is often used to legitimize donor development initiatives rather than letting the people decide what they need.[339] This was also a complaint from some of the literature, which argued that NGOs end up "fitting" causes into specific 'boxes' that are set by donors.[340] Platteau argues that even communities or CBOs end up aligning requests with what NGOs are providing, adopting the methods and goals of NGOs in order to obtain financial support. When this support dries up, the community 'participation' dries up as well.[341]

Donors also seem to fall prey to the problem of having to 'fit' causes into donor 'boxes' since they must follow their home government development priorities. In this situation, foreign

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[338] Gina Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World," 134-136.
[339] Mark Waddington and Giles Mohan, "Falling Forward," in ed. Hickey and Mohan, *Participation,* 219-230.
[340] Castro, "Engendering Power," 20, 28, 33; and White, "Depoliticizing Development," 152.
[341] Platteau, "Pitfalls of Participatory Development," 129-132.

governments end up being the ultimate decision makers in development initiatives. As

discussed in the previous chapter, a CIDA staff member specifically complained that the CIDA

office in Ghana must 'fit' their current programs into the new thematic areas that had been set

out in the recent ODA bill.[342] Similarly, Carolyn Long cited a study in which USAID employees

explained that their most important stakeholders are the US congress, since congressional

representatives vote on their funding each year. In this case programs have to be 'packaged' to

fit what US congressmen will approve.[343]

There appeared to be strong input from donors into the types of projects being run and the

actions of the participating NGOs. As an SDO staff member explained, donors set the priorities

that NGOs must follow before they even arrive at a specific project. So although the NGOs may

not recognize that the donors are setting the agenda for their projects (since the NGOs have

control over implementation), it is important to emphasize that these priorities are set before the

NGOs begin to 'bid' on projects for funding, and funding is only available in many cases if the

NGO is able to implement a project that fits with donor priorities.

Wacam was the one participating NGO that was very cautious about the funding they

receive, and they were also the one NGO that demonstrated the ability to devolve 'deeper'

decision making power to the community level: the Board of Directors is chosen by community

members from community members, and they set the agenda for the organization. It is possible

however, that the agenda is still monopolized by the senior staff of the organization.

Donor funding also puts heavy demands on NGOs' time and resources. Many NGOs

expressed the necessity to attend forums and collaborate with other NGOs and international

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[342] Anonymous, CIDA Interview.
[343] Long, *Participation of the Poor*, 123-124, 152.

actors. With the small amount time and resources available to these NGOs, if much of this time is spent trying to collaborate and discuss issues with other NGOs, it stands to reason that less is spent working with people at the grassroots. Although it is obviously necessary to discuss and collaborate with other NGOs, there seemed to be little time and resources spent accessing and collaborating with partners at the 'grassroots' compared to educating them. The participating NGOs also seemed to spend a larger amount of time and resources (as described by them in their explanations of their roles) dealing with donors, other NGOs, and legislators than with people at the 'grassroots.'

Donors put heavy demands on NGOs' time and resources to design proposals for funding as well as to measure impacts of their programs.[344] These demands (including fluency in English and demands for 'quick' successes) create a situation where there is less time for the implementation of development initiatives and mobilization of people, as well as little time spent building long term development strategies or theories. CIDA staff in Ghana explained that it is not only recipients of donor funds that are expected to demonstrate quick development 'successes.' As discussed in the previous chapter, CIDA programs in Ghana must demonstrate 'successes' (especially under the new 'aid effectiveness' agenda) in order to maintain funding, resulting in a very clear results-based orientation with their programs.

All of the NGOs that participated (with the exception of SDO) had no complaints about the amount of time they needed to spend writing proposals for funding and then evaluating and demonstrating the 'success' of their programs to appease donors. However, based on the processes that were explained of how to apply for funds through donors (and donor NGOs such

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[344] Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest," 167- 168; Mitlin et al, "Reclaiming Development?, 1702, 1709, 1711; Shivji, *Silences*, 34-36.

as CARE), a relatively large amount of time and resources were necessary to dedicate to applying for funding. CARE's process to choose local partners to fund, for example, takes approximately 2 months to complete. Although Wacam did not complain about the strain on their time and resources to obtain funding, an interview with RAVI (a former donor organization to Wacam) revealed that it generally takes six months for the organization to determine who will receive funding. After this time, a part of the training provided to organizations that receive funding is in writing proposals to apply for funding.[345]

One possible solution to this problem is the provision of 'core' funding to NGOs. HRAO was the only participating NGO that currently (as of the time of research) was receiving core funding. According to many of the participating NGOs, core funding is very difficult to procure because donors have little control over how the money is used once it is given to the organization. When core funding is received however, it allows NGOs to maintain a more consistent focus in their programs, and to spend time on implementation activities that might otherwise need to be spent designing project specific proposals. When NGOs lack core funding there is an inability to focus on long term development initiatives or theory building, since donor demands (and therefore program focuses) can change and the organization needs to adapt to these changes to procure more funding.

Core funding means a greater focus on long term goals and sustainability of 'programs' rather than individual short term 'projects.' Competition for funding on the other hand creates divisions among NGOs and leads to a focus on results so that funding continues. Competition

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[345] Sam Ocran, Notes.

also decreases the ability to promote long term 'harder to quantify' mobilization and solidarity between organizations, or unified strategies and activities for development.[346]

The NGOs that participated in this research all discussed the necessity to work together with other NGOs with common goals. It is likely that the NGOs have adjusted to some criticisms and have begun to try to work together to coordinate their development efforts and avoid duplication (for example by attending forums together). The other organizations that the participating NGOs described working with however were only organizations with 'similar purposes' or 'visions,' demonstrating a lack of willingness to coordinate with NGOs outside of their field. Rather than work with other NGOs that may have had different visions to try to come to a consensus on development strategies, many organizations refused to work with NGOs that they viewed as having different 'visions' or ideologies, such as DWM.

Despite the universal expression by participants of coordinated development efforts among NGOs, there was also a lot of discussion about the competitiveness in obtaining funding. This leads me to argue that it is likely that although NGOs are trying to work together to avoid duplication of projects/programs, the competitive funding environment inhibits their capacity to unify on purposes and programs. SDO staff described how funding in Ghana is becoming more and more difficult to obtain, and competition is very high to obtain scarce funds. HRAO staff went further in alluding to the lack of unity in the NGO environment, explaining that obtaining funding is often very competitive and some NGOs work against others in their efforts to obtain funding.[347] The aid environment that NGOs work within is very competitive and creates

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[346] Streeten, "NGOs and Development", 195-196; Tagoe, "Challenging the Orthodoxy," 719; Shivji, *Silences*, 34-36.
[347] Jay, HRAO Interview.

problems with the ability of NGOs to work together and coordinate efforts, although most of the participating NGOs seemed reluctant to discuss this topic or criticize other NGOs.

Another constraint that donor funding puts on NGOs is their necessity to appear politically 'neutral' to maintain funding. Relationships with donors and donor countries diminish the political character of NGOs and create a focus on more 'neutral' issues and technical services.[348] Following from Clifford Bob, the aid environment is only interested in technical services and 'social consultancies' in development. Movements that are successful in gaining international support in this environment are generally well-known internationally for non-political reasons.[349] Kamat echoes this idea, claiming that in order to get World Bank funding, NGOs distance themselves from language and programs that stress the structural causes of power and inequality in favour of more 'neutral' assessments of community needs.[350] CIDA itself needs to be cautious in its language and programs, to maintain a level of political 'neutrality' that suits Canadian government priorities. As explained in the previous chapter, CIDA Ghana is not able to promote the 'rights-based' approach to development because the language is too politically charged, especially in relation to sovereignty rights in Canada.[351]

Despite the expression of political 'neutrality' by many development actors, language and programs in development often have strong political associations and implications. Democracy requires political competition, so when civil society (especially advocacy groups) attempt to suit all political tastes (and thereby be 'neutral'), civil society is effectively not saying anything, and

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[348] Petras and Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked*, 128.
[349] Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 14, 20, 184.
[350] Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest," 167-168.
[351] Anonymous, CIDA Interview.

therefore loses its usefulness.[352] As expressed in Long (2001), those in the development community (although not always in this research) "have come to understand that the very nature of development is political—not in a partisan way but in the generic sense of enabling people to assume more power over their lives and their economic and social circumstances.[353]" Other authors reiterate this point,[354] arguing that in reality there is no separation between the economic and political realms. Being 'neutral' politically therefore means being 'neutral' economically, and effectively siding with the status quo.

The NGOs that participated in this research seemed to confirm the view that funding 'neutralizes' the political character of organizations to maintain funding. With the exception of DWM, all of the participating NGOs made strong claims to be non-partisan.   When asked about being 'political' or whether they believed that NGOs were involved in political work, all of the NGOs except Wacam, DWM, and SDO claimed that NGOs are able to remain outside of the realm of politics in their activities, while engaging in work that had clear political implications (i.e. deciding how scarce resources are used and by whom).

As explained in the previous chapter, most of the NGOs that participated in this research also focussed on 'neutral' subjects for funding that are acceptable within the current development paradigm. The CPC and CDD both work in building the capacity of government in Ghana, effectively working at promoting 'good governance,' an important catch-phrase within

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[352] Alison Van Rooy, "The Art of Strengthening Civil Society," in ed. Van Rooy, *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*, (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998): 199.
[353] Long, *Participation*, 139
[354] Shivji, *Silences*, 34-36, 39; Botchway, "The Politics and Apolitics of Development," 323-324; Richards, *Pobladoras*.

the current development paradigm.[355] HRAO and SDO also work in areas that are considered more 'neutral' subjects in development (human rights and sports respectively). AAI tends to use a more radical language than many of the other organizations that participated (with the exceptions of Wacam and DWM) but they receive the majority of their funding from the politically 'neutral' area of child sponsorship programs.

The only organization that participated in this research that was overtly 'political' was DWM. This organization was also the only organization that some of the other NGOs that participated claimed that they would definitely not work with, and was the only NGO participating that had no outside funding at this time (under an NDC administration), relying instead on membership fees to maintain the organization.

As mentioned earlier, 'non-partisanship' seemed to be an almost 'cardinal' principle with most of the participating NGOs. The desire to remain non-partisan seems somewhat necessary, especially in a society as politically divided along partisan lines as Ghana. The desire to not engage in 'political activity' however, is generally not possible when working in development. As explained by some of the literature, when NGOs only focus on 'neutral' areas in development, they are in effect ignoring the political nature of many of their activities and validating the status quo. The expectation that NGOs remain politically neutral seems to flow from the current World Bank and U.S. development paradigm focus on 'good governance.' This

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[355] See Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa*, (New York: Zed Books, 2001).

model promotes working with local governments to implement aid programs, but only as 'neutral[356]' aid organizations.

Following this argument, NGOs must present themselves as neutral partners with no ideological preferences or political theory outside of the dominant (neo-liberal) paradigm if they want to maintain funding.[357] This development model precludes coordinated action around a central political philosophy that could be the beginning of broader social change through NGOs as suggested by authors such as Shivji.[358] It also precludes any coordination of action that could engage citizens with political parties. The case of women getting more involved in politics is characteristic of this problem. Many NGOs are working to get women in Ghana more involved in politics and more opportunities to be elected to political positions, but they are not working within the political parties (with the exception of DWM) due to the necessity to remain non-partisan. Working from within political parties would allow the NGOs to encourage parties to prioritize the involvement of women in their parties or to get more women running for positions within the parties. The conflict between remaining politically neutral and supporting political participation was highlighted above by a CIDA staff member in Ghana. While denying the necessity for NGOs to take political stances, she argued that for women to become more involved in politics, development actors need to work with political parties to get them to make space for women in the parties.[359]

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[356] 'Neutrality' in this instance is defined as acting in a way that avoids politically charged or controversial issues. Any activities or discourse that falls outside of this development paradigm or supports coordinated action under an ideology that counters the prevalent neo-liberal discourse, is considered 'political' and therefore illegitimate.

[357] For example, although both AAG and Wacam teach citizen their rights under the Mining and Minerals Act, Wacam's ties their teaching to political theories that address the relationship between the international system and poverty.

[358] Shivji, *Silences*, 34-36.

[359] Anonymous, CIDA Interview.

Following Samir Amin, for the poor and excluded to have a voice and truly participate in the formulation of policy and practise at the national level, it is necessary for groups to cement political alliances and create an alternative national policy.[360] Gramsci's writings echo this idea, lamenting the fact that many people speak of theory as an accessory to practise. He argues that the theoretical aspect, distinguished by a group of people specialized in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas, is absolutely inextricable from practise. Unfortunately, the process of articulating theory is long, and often tries the loyalty of the masses.[361] By joining with political parties and creating an alternative political theory the poor and excluded can participate more effectively in decision making. This is not possible if NGOs must avoid taking a political stance on all issues to maintain funding, and remain strictly non-partisan in their approach.

Donor funding helps create this situation, and is therefore an important factor (in conjunction with the other donor effects discussed above) in constraining NGOs in the current development model. As discussed above however, organizational roots in conjunction with physical and social distance also seem to play a strong role in determining NGOs' abilities to promote effective participation and act as effective representatives in development.

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[360] Amin, "Social Movements at the Periphery," 76-100.
[361] Gramsci, *Selections*, 334.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This research focussed on whether NGOs are able to promote effective grassroots

participation and act as effective representatives. It also investigated the constraints that exist on

NGOs to achieve these goals. In order to address these questions, my research results were

combined with the relevant literature to explore the types of participation and representation that

occur through NGOs in development initiatives. Following this, I analyzed the possible

constraints on NGOs to achieve effective participation and representation outcomes. These

constraints were compared to the actions of different NGOs to determine which constraints

seemed to have the biggest effects on the NGOs' actions at the grassroots level. This chapter

begins with a final analysis of the type of representation and participation that is occurring

through NGOs in development.

NGOs: Promoting Effective Participation and Representation in Development?

Despite rhetoric espousing the importance of 'community driven' development,

participation in development initiatives continues to exist mostly in implementation, and

decision-making is monopolized by external actors. The chain of funding (as well as the chain

of decision making) from donors to NGOs is not generally direct, and funds often flow through a

series of organizations before reaching the grassroots level. For example, some of Wacam's

funding previously came from a multi-donor project (RAVI), which received their funding

through a consortium of NGOs and consultants (AAI, CDD, IDLgroup, and Participatory

Development Associates), who received their funding for this project from a number of

international development associations (including DFID and CIDA), who in turn needed to

acquire funding objectives and approval from their home governments (The British and

Canadian governments respectively) (See Figure 1.1). Ultimately, although objectives and

project agendas may be 'tweaked' along the way to appease donors while maintaining the recipient organization's plans for a project, NGOs (although nominally 'non-governmental') often have the general objectives for projects set by the foreign national governments that are providing funding.

As argued by Mansbridge, effective collective decision making requires participants to have a common interest on matters related to the decision, as well as mutual equal respect. In small groups or communities, bonds of friendship draw the group together and facilitate participation by group members.[362] This view of the necessity for 'bonds of friendship' and 'common interests' for true democratic decision-making has clear implications for NGOs acting as community representatives in development as well as promoting participatory decision-making. Although Mansbridge seems to simplify and romanticize the issues to some extent, her point is still salient. While bonds of friendship may not always exist, and power relations are just as relevant at the local level and in small group settings, common interests and common ties between the NGO and the communities allow for greater access to input and a greater likelihood of achieving deeper and broader participation (participation at all levels of the decision-making process and by all stakeholders).

According to this research, most NGOs act as 'trustee-type' representatives, viewing themselves as experts acting in the 'best interest' of the 'poor and marginalized,' but not in a way that is responsive to them. Access to input from grassroots actors generally involves systematic consultations with affected constituencies (including citizen monitoring, public hearings, advisory councils). These consultations lack broad involvement of actors outside of those that

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[362] Mansbridge, 24-29.

are considered 'legitimate' to Western actors, such as higher capacity local CBOs and NGOs. Consultations generally occur after the project has already been decided upon, and seem to exist simply to obtain community 'buy in' for the project.[363]

Constraints

After a thorough review of literature from many different fields, donor control was the biggest factor expected to impede NGOs from promoting effective participation at the grassroots and acting as responsive representatives. This research therefore took a close look at the donor system and the potential and real impacts of donor control on NGOs, but also explored other structural causes of constraints such as the organizational roots of the NGO. This section begins with an analysis of the possibility that individual and organizational choice (such as ideology) plays the biggest role in determining the NGOs' actions, followed by a look at the structural constraints on NGOs.

Ideological Orientation

This research found that the ideological orientation of NGO leadership did not seem to have a strong effect on their ability to promote grassroots participation and act as responsive representatives. Both Wacam and AAI leadership (for example) use radical left language in their literature and view their roles as engaging with social movements, deepening community accountability and creating solidarity with the poor rather than simply offering charity. In practise however, Wacam seemed to be much more responsive and accessible to individuals and organizations at the grassroots level.

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[363] The problem of consultations occurring after projects have already been decided upon is salient in relation to resource companies and Treaty Band Consultations in Canada, and would be an interesting area for further research.

Since Wacam is a much smaller organization than AAI, organizational size may play a role in this situation. Leaders of smaller organizations are able to maintain a better value consensus (ideological dissemination) throughout the organization and better control over the actions of the organization.[364] However, size of the organization is not the only factor that likely affects value consensus. Staff backgrounds and motivation to join the organization also play a role, and will be discussed further below, especially in their correlation with organizational roots.

The International Donor System

This research found that as suggested by the critical literature, donors play a strong role in determining NGOs' roles in development. Although the majority of NGOs did not perceive any constraints from donors, the donors were largely setting the parameters that the NGOs had to work within. Donors tend to control a few critical aspects of the way that NGOs are able to operate: They set the agendas for development initiatives for NGOs to follow; they expect NGOs to be 'non political'—to operate as though they are neutral parties in development with no ties to any political theories[365]; and they create a situation in which NGOs are forced to compete for funding. Competitive application processes for funding create a situation in which NGOs must put scarce time and resources into project proposals, reports, and evaluations, as well as have a high degree of competency in English. The donor expectation that NGOs remain 'non-political' affects the ability of NGOs to organize broader collective action and engage with political parties to implement development initiatives. It also precludes the ability of NGOs to choose development objectives or programs that fall outside of 'acceptable' development topics.

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[364] Billis and MacKeith, 121-124.
[365] Wacam did seem to demonstrate some theory building as an organization (e.g. by focussing on and teaching about the roots of poverty) but lacked a clear unified strategy on how to address these problems, as well as the financial sustainability to maintain a strategy if one was developed.

The dilemma that donor funding creates for NGOs due to the tension between their necessity to acquire funding and their accountability to local groups is reminiscent of the problem with 'competing constituencies' in developing democracies that Rita Abrahamsen highlights so well in her book *Disciplining Democracy*. Abrahamsen argues that the donor country 'constituency' always takes priority over the domestic constituency, since funding depends on it, or else the administration risks huge financial shortfalls and eventual defeat. The administration cannot please both constituencies, and therefore must make an impossible decision between the two. It is possible that many NGOs are facing the same problem, caught between their goals of being accountable to the poor at the grassroots level, and their necessity to acquire external funding—and unable to entirely pursue the accountability goals without losing the support of funders. Clifford Bob touches on this in his investigation of social movements, arguing that funding ends up defining and 'neutralizing' causes. Patricia Richards also echoes this sentiment, arguing that as soon as there is a necessity to focus on the economic realm, the economic ends up defining the struggle.[366]

David Korten's analysis of NGOs as 'value driven' or 'market driven' also seems salient here.[367] From Korten's perspective, 'market driven' NGOs are less likely to engage in advocacy on controversial issues because of the potential for losses in funding. Korten separates 'market driven' and 'value driven' NGOs into different categories (Public Service Contractor NGOs and Voluntary Organization NGOs respectively), but argues that the latter are drawn to become 'market-driven' to acquire funding and better pay for staff. He also argues however that they are

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[366] Patricia Richards, *Pobladoras, Indigenas, and the State: Conflicts over Women's Rights in Chile*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004): 8-10, 70-83.
[367] Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*, 102- 105.

more able to resist this temptation if they have clearer organizational goals and understanding of their underlying philosophy. Drawing on Korten's argument, it is possible that NGOs such as Wacam who have a clear philosophy behind why they were formed, scepticism of becoming driven by funding, and good dissemination of their underlying philosophy throughout the organization, are more likely to resist becoming market driven and maintain more consistency between discourse and action.

Organizational Roots

Although donor funding clearly affects the ability of NGOs to operate independently, the donor system alone does not explain the difference between the way that different NGOs engage with and respond to the needs of communities. Wacam, as explained above, receives support from an international NGO (Oxfam America) and from RAVI—a CIDA/DFID project that is managed by a consortium that includes AAI and CDD—maintains a similar organizational discourse and ideology to AAI, but is much more accessible and engaged at the grassroots level. This discrepancy can not be attributed solely to their positions as a domestic NGO, since the CDD is also a domestic NGO. As explained above, organizational size likely plays a role (and there is a body of research on the effects of organizational size on actions, and how growth affects NGOs[368]), but other smaller NGOs in this research (such as the HRAO) lacked the same responsiveness and accountability to the grassroots as Wacam or DWM.

One important difference between Wacam and DWM (the NGOs that are more accessible and accountable to the grassroots) and the other participant NGOs is their criticism of the NGO model of development and their seeming discomfort of the NGO label for their organizations.

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[368] Edwards and Hulme, *Making a Difference*; Sangeeta, Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era." *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 1 (2004): 168.

Both of these organizations began with the idea of being social movements rather than NGOs, and this key point (organizational roots) seemed to be a strong determining factor in organizational actions.

Organizational roots in themselves do not fully explain the differences between organizations. Even if an NGO has formal access mechanisms in place to allow participation from and access to the grassroots level, physical and social 'proximity' are necessary to make use of these mechanisms and create accountability to grassroots 'clients' or 'constituencies.'

As discussed above, there is often little consultation within the NGO 'model' of representation, and there ends up being a situation of representation without accountability.[369] Since NGOs are not formal representative organizations, they can create a situation in which the people are unsure of where to air their grievances if they have a problem or are unhappy with the way they are being 'represented.' Wacam and DWM demonstrated better mechanisms to access people at the grassroots and therefore greater possibilities to respond to their needs than the other participating NGOs. DWM has clear mechanisms to respond to demands from communities through their leadership structure. They also demonstrated responsiveness to unofficial civil society groups and individuals, as well as the ability for community members to know where to 'air grievances' through their openness in allowing community members to come to the office and meet with Madame Rawlings (the organization's president).

Wacam's board is elected from and by community members, who then set the agenda for the NGO. Wacam also works directly with communities and unofficial civil society at the grassroots, inviting individual community members as representatives to participate in their

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[369] Dibie, *NGOs and Sustainable Development*, 5; Ninsin, "Markets," 100-101.

workshops, and is also open to having individual community members come to them seeking help and advice on mining issues.

In this research, there seemed to be a link between physical and social distance and organizational roots. As argued above, social distance affects the accessibility of NGOs to grassroots actors. Community members seemed to feel comfortable approaching both Wacam and DWM to deliver input and discuss their problems, and since DWM's president is elite, similar social class alone does not explain this. The national roots of these organizations also do not explain this phenomenon, since the CDD did not have the same approachability. The root of these organizations in the communities that they serve seems to be the best explanation of their accessibility and approachability to grassroots actors.

Wacam and DWM's roots as social movement-type organizations meant that they have some built in access mechanisms (meeting with community members about the problems and what needs to be done). In Wacam's case decreased physical and social distance from the NGO to the grassroots likely serves to explain this. In DWM's case, greater social distance does exist between the upper management level and grassroots actors, but the organization's roots as a social movement type organization with a political party type structure meant that it had, from the beginning, very clear access mechanisms in place and decreased social distance to people at the grassroots level through its hierarchal community representation structure.

Another main difference between Wacam and DWM and the other participant NGOs seems to be their ability to maintain a clearer value consensus within the organizations. Both of these organizations have ensured that the organization's values and social mission are well known and adhered to by the NGO staff. It remains to be seen whether this value commitment and consensus could continue with organizational growth. In this case again however, the

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NGOs' roots seem to help explain their ability to maintain a value consensus since the staffs began working as volunteers or community liaisons and therefore had, from the beginning, a strong attachment to the mission of the NGO, in comparison to all of the other NGOs in which most participating staffs joined the NGO in a competitive hiring process.

Final Conclusions

Returning to the question of how NGOs are operationalizing the concepts of representation and participation in development, most NGOs are acting as 'trustee'-type representatives for the people at the grassroots in development initiatives (acting in the best interest of the represented, but not in a way that is responsive to them). Within this role NGOs tend to act more as special interest groups, advocating for the needs of certain types of people or groups (i.e. the poor, disabled, landless, people affected by mining, etc).

NGOs are generally elite organizations with continuing requirements to obtain external funding, who end up implementing certain types of participation that fit with donor expectations and priorities with little access and responsiveness to people at the grassroots level. There are exceptions to this however, and Wacam and DWM are good examples of organizations that have been able to follow their own agendas and maintain mechanisms to access and respond to the people at the grassroots outside of well established official civil society organizations.

The main conclusion from this research is that NGOs are able to operate outside of donor control, but generally only if they began as an organization without donor control or external influence—i.e. as more social movement type organizations or organizations with political party roots such as DWM. These types of NGOs are better able to maintain ties to the grassroots and an organization-wide value consensus, increasing the likelihood that staff at all organizational levels will adhere to participatory principles and seek to obtain input from the communities that

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they work with (if this is the NGO's stated goal). Promoting effective participation and acting as effective representatives (i.e. 'deep' and ongoing participation at all decision making levels, and acting in the interests of the people in a way that is responsive to them) requires taking the time and resources to meet with and learn from community members who may not be part of 'legitimate' or official civil society groups, and having an organizational structure that is able to decrease perceived social distance and become accessible to the average grassroots actor. NGOs must also be able to do so with little funding, while accepting the risk of losing funding if they choose to step outside of subjects that are considered 'safe' by donors. Without these features NGOs run the risk of losing touch with their 'constituents' at the grassroots level and simply implementing donor agendas according to the dominant development paradigm, no matter how good their intentions, or how radical their discourse.

Research Implications, Limitations, and Future Possibilities

The goal of this research was to make a contribution to the development literature by grounding empirical research on the roles of NGOs to democratic representation theory. By doing so, it is my hope that this research has contributed to a clearer and theoretically grounded understanding of how NGOs act as representatives for people at the grassroots level. It is also my hope that by basing this research in democratic representation theory, this research has contributed a new 'tool' for assessing the efficacy of NGO advocacy. Lastly, it is my hope that this research will provide a positive contribution to NGOs and other international and domestic development actors. This research highlights several problems inherent with externally created development programs and approaches: i.e. the current WB 'local and community driven development' theory, however good intentioned, seems fundamentally flawed due to its invariable external involvement in the planning processes and the inescapably unequal power

relations between the WB staff and community members. This is compounded by the WB's unfailing focus on pro-market development policies,[370] since requiring pro-market development policies and programs means limiting the real choices available to communities and citizens at the grassroots level.

In practical terms, in order to become more effective development actors need to critically re-evaluate their relationships with communities and their positions as representatives. International NGOs would be better positioned to achieve more 'radical' development goals as intermediary funding organizations (similar to Oxfam America with Wacam). NGOs that began as social movements or grassroots initiated organizations should be conscious of and work to maintain solid mechanisms to access and respond to the needs of the people they are representing, including unofficial groups or individuals at the grassroots, especially as the organizations grow and change over time. All development actors should be conscious of hiring practises, and the effects (at all levels of the organization) that staff backgrounds and commitments to the organizational goals and values will have on program outcomes.

This research has some clear limitations, including a lack of time and resources to compare NGOs in other countries, or to compare a greater number of NGOs across the three categories. This research would also have benefitted from more discussions with affected community members in different areas and more access to programs run by international NGOs at the local level.

This research also leads to many unanswered questions and areas for further research. While a vast amount of literature exists on democratic representation, a very limited amount

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[370] Binswanger-Mkhize, *Local and Community Driven Development,* 217.

exists on how NGOs are acting as representatives for people at the grassroots level in

development, and how effective they are in these roles. More work in this area needs to be done

on where and with whom NGOs are spending the majority of their time (e.g. with legislators,

other NGOs, or with community members).   This research area would also benefit from further

research into grassroots and community perspectives on representation, as well as linking these

perspectives with traditional local views on governance and democracy. Finally, future research

in this area would benefit from examining how the NGOs in this research change as they grow

and develop over time.

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